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Milo B. Howard, Jr., Editor

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THE END OF ODEN'S WAR:  
A CONFEDERATE CAPTAIN'S DIARY

edited by

Michael Barton

John Piney Oden was one of the Civil War's persevering men. He represents those who kept trying to be warriors at the front, but whose wounds made them wait in the rear, wanting very much to act while they could only watch. His diary from April 6 to June 29, 1863, shows his frustration in clear detail. He faced the enemy, ennui, and he knew there was no glory in that.

Oden was born on May 4, 1823, and was a native of the area around Selma, Alabama. He enlisted at Montevallo in Company K, 10th Regiment, Alabama Infantry, on June 4, 1861, at the rank of First Sergeant. However, he soon became ill, and was sent to Warrenton Springs on August 21 to convalesce. But he did not recover quickly, was discharged for "disability" on September 12 that year, and left with the \$85.66 due him for clothing and pay.

Later he was fit enough to rejoin his regiment, this time as a Lieutenant, but was wounded in the leg at Sharpsburg on September 17, 1862. He went home again to recuperate, then tried to catch up with his men in early April, 1863; now he was a Captain, and that is where the diary begins.

It is evident from the first few entries that Oden must have been a fairly important man — after arriving in Montgomery on April 7 he arranged some "cotton matters," and he soon had an interview with the Governor, who gave him a letter that would make it possible to get castings from a foundry for his mill. With those affairs settled Oden traveled by train from Montgomery to Atlanta, Knoxville, and finally Richmond, arriving on April 11. There a doctor told him it would be a long time, "if ever," before he had full use of his lame leg. Still, he took charge of a squad of soldiers and went on after his regiment. He found it near Hamilton's Crossing and settled down to wait for a chance at more duty.

Here his diary concentrates on the details of camp life: soldiers fixing fish hooks, going on picket, hearing sermons, watching Yankees, staying out of the rain, policing the grounds, and waiting for battle. His life now was a very "monotonous thing," he wrote, and he felt like a "common loafer." Battle finally came at Chancellorsville from May 1 to 5. Oden obtained a doctor's permission to follow his regiment, and so he was able to report from the sidelines. Though Lee's army was victorious, Oden wrote afterwards about those comrades who had been personally defeated: "the work of amputation is now fully begun . . . enough too, to excite all the sympathy within the human breast." Walking over the field a few days later, he observed that "great waste follows great battles," but now "nature" was "once more permitted to roll on."

Oden then made application to be a Quartermaster assigned to Talladega County "to collect the taxes in kind." He waited impatiently for his paperwork to be processed, spending most of his time visiting friends in camp, admiring the full dress of Spring, and worrying about the possibility of defeat at Vicksburg. Otherwise, he was still impressed with the "sluggishness of ordinary camp duties." His application had not been approved by June 4, so he submitted his resignation from the army. By June 9 he was back in Richmond. The time he spent in the capital was also "rather dull," taken up by trying to get the red tape of his discharge untangled. Finally he got out. Then he bought \$2050 worth of tobacco and started for home.

When he landed in Selma he closed his diary with the briefest, concrete commentary on the effects of the war: "Saw a great many men on the streets but few acquaintances."

Oden's diary is reproduced here exactly from a typescript copy; the original text was in a small, green, leather book, 5¾ by 3½ inches, with 85 daily, one-page entries. On the flyleaf was inscribed, "To Lieut. Oden, from Bettie A. H. of Maryland." It is now the only personal document made public from his unit — there is no regimental history or anyone else's diary, letters, or memoir published. I am indebted to Professor and Mrs. John S. Wade, Jr., of Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, for making it available, and also to the National Archives for giving me more information on Oden.

Diary of Lt. John Piney Oden: April 6, 1863 — June 29, 1863  
Small green leather book  $5\frac{3}{4}$  X  $3\frac{1}{2}$ .  
Inscribed on the flyleaf:

To Lieut. Oden

from

Bettie A. H. of Maryland

1863

April 6, Monday. Beautiful morning and long to be remembered. Set out once more to my Regt. which I have been separated with since the ever memorable Battle of Sharpsburg on the 17th of Sept. last. Am in tolerable good general health but not clear of lameness. Arrived at Selma in due time, got my cotton matter satisfactorily arranged, bade adieu to Father and other friends. Got aboard of the Steamer St. Nichols bound for Montgomery about sunset.

April 7. Arrived at Montgomery early this morning. Saw my lady friend safely situated at the Exchange Hotel. Had an interview with his excellency the Governor, obtained a letter recommending or advising any foundry to do any casting that may be necessary for my mill, got the clothing Col. Darby had here for our Co. Strolled around the balance of the day, met W. T. Stubblefield and others of my acquaintance. There are a great many going back to front.

April 8. Left Montgomery on the  $5\frac{1}{2}$  A. M. train. Beautiful morning but a little too cool, had some frost, fear the wheat and fruit will be injured at home. "Tis a very pleasant time indeed to travel. Was very much crowded. Arrived at Atlanta in due time. Nothing of any note occurred on the way. Left on the 7 P. M. train for Dalton after partaking sumptuously of a two dollar supper. When dark came on stowed away the children and made other arrangements for napping.

April 9. Daylight found us considerably on our way towards Knoxville. This morning frost here is nearly as heavy as any we have had this winter. In passing Hanover met my old friend Mr. Tate who treated me so kindly last fall. Saw a great many soldiers about Knoxville. Met a great many paroled prisoners captured at Murfresboro. The news is confirmed

of our successful defense at Charleston. Arrived in due time at Bristol, there left Mrs. Cherry.

April 10. Travelled all night, again another beautiful morning, bright frost, everything looks very winter-like. The wheat in particular is very late. Arrived at Liberty in due time, but owing to a breakdown or run-off of a train ahead, lay over here until the next regular train which is twenty-four hours. There were several injured, one Mississippi (?) soldier killed a paroled prisoner from Tennessee. Met Dr. Letcher, strolled around, found private quarters and are very comfortably *fixed*.

April 11. This is a beautiful morning, quite cool to an Alabamian. Strolled around town and passed off the time as best we could. Took the 2 P. M. train, arrived at Richmond 3 A. M. Sunday — meanwhile lying over yesterday visited Dr. Letcher's hospital. Spent a while with him very pleasantly. While there wrote a letter home. All the trains between there and Knoxville going both ways are crowded and a great many prisoners are going both ways.

April 12. Sunday. Very beautiful morning indeed. Went to my old friend Mrs. Taylor's, engaged board and after breakfast commenced a stroll to Exchange Hotel, Post Office, Capitol Square, etc. After dinner called on Dr. Clark who examined my wound and gave it as his opinion that it would be a good while before I could have good use of my limb if ever, went to the passport office to get our papers to pass to our Regt., reported to L. H. (?) next morning and took care of a squad.

April 13. Took charge of a squad at the train and set out for Hamilton's Crossing at 10 o'clock A. M., arrived there about 11 A. M., reported my squad to the Provost Marshal, got leave and direction to our Regt. Met Geo. Taylor with a wagon and got our luggage carried out and took a seat myself. The Regt. is stationed about 7 or 8 miles from the depot, passed through the battlefields, etc.

April 14. Found the boys generally very well and in fine spirits and only moderately fixed up, as they have only been at this place a short time. The Regt. is crowded very much and



very much tangled and confused and consequently confused, hence from these circumstances, presume our stay at this place will not be long. At any rate, hope we will be better fitted up by moving again soon. Went out to the field to witness a brig. drill as a spectator. Have not reported for active duty yet.

April 15, This is one of the dreaded days in camp, raining heavy all day, all closely confined to their several or respective bunk or shelters. While some are only tolerably good, others are most intolerable, however, let the wide world wag as will, the soldier will be gay and happy still. As I have taken a very sore throat and bad cold for the life of me cannot be very happy. We finally succeeded in getting J. T. Mims' substitute mustered in and John of course relieved.

April 16. Cleared off this morning very much to our gratification as our Regt. has to go on picket this evening so most sincerely hope the winter is now broke.' All hands are very lively this morning fixing up fish hooks, etc., preparatory for going on picket. Wrote to William Perryman about the death of his brother Henry. Sauntered around camp, rather lonely this evening, however, met with my old friend Capt. Truss and whiled away the balance of the evening.

April 17. The weather has not entirely cleared off. Visited our picket post, found the river bank slick as an oyster slide being used all winter along here the Yankees are all along on the opposite side seemingly diligent. Our heights enable one to view their forces for some distance. There is a good large force in sight. Our boys are scattered all over the battlefield like so many cattle or sheep gathering wild onions, others are to be found up to their necks seining for fish just below a dam *across* the river above the city.

April 18. This is a beautiful sunshiny day, the most spring-like of any since my arrival and even any as yet this season. Had our payrolls approved by the Col. Com. There is more leisure today the boys say than they have had in sometime and hence permission is granted to several to wash but not having utensils enough to wash in, but few can wash at a time. The camps are being policed and a general fixing up is going on.

Puts one in mind of days gone by at home sweeping yards, etc., Saturday evenings.

April 19. Sabbath morning clear and beautiful. All hands are astir fixing for Regt. inspection. The Col. seemed very much pleased. Our guns were bright as new money. After this, assembled and heard a most excellent sermon from Rev. Mr. Renfro. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation. Col. W. H. Forney came in this evening looking only tolerable well. The day passed off unusually quiet, a little cooler towards night. New moon seen this eve.

April 20. Another rainy day, not quite so hard and more intervals than the last, consequently, the boys are out occasionally playing cat, etc. J. T. McMillian left us this morning for home. Learn the Yankees are unusually still today. As soon as the weather settles will look for a movement of some kind. However much they may move and change about, have no idea they will ever attempt a crossing here. Everything seems to be more dull and monotonous every day in camps.

April 21. Quite cool today and very unlike spring. All vegetation is certainly very late. Consulted Col. Forney about getting a horse. He advised me not to buy yet. He is of the opinion we will not move from this place for sometime. Col. Caldwell came in today, have not seen him yet. No news from Norfolk or Suffolk. We are anxiously awaiting news, from former news we are very expectant from that quarter.

April 22. Our Regt. is out on picket; last night was very cold for the business, however, as that is a getting way from camps and a chance to amuse themselves fishing, all hands go very cheerfully. Visited the picket line, had a very plain view of the Yankees, their pickets, reserves, etc., but did not see many other of their forces from this position. This was the extreme posts up the river or the left of our infantry line. Procured some fish bait and tried my hand but did not succeed.

April 23. This is another desperate rainy day. Pretty hard and cold hence very disagreeable. No time to read nor write but must answer Kate's received 21st inst. Finished the payroll and drew the money, *paid* off the Co. One Co. from each

Regt. of our Brig. was called out. Some say to strengthen the pickets somewhere above where the Yankees are threatening a crossing. Would prefer to think the reverse; viz., that we are about to make a small raid on them.

April 24. Still raining this morning, very cold at that, almost sleet, bad time soldiering along now; however, we crowded up in and under our little and otherwise scanty shelters and while away the dreary moments as best we can. Yesterday's news from the North justifies the idea of no more fighting until fall, if then. Witnessed the unpleasant sight of two men of Co. H (?) marched in front of our Regt. with bbl-shirts and one-half of their heads shaved.

April 25. Clear and very windy today, as the wind is from the north 'tis a little cool and very unlike April weather. Feel better today than I have since my return to the camp. Hope now to get along without any more setting back but have already fallen off very much. Col. Forney made his first attempt to drill the Regt. The Regt. is very well drilled. Strolled around camp to while away time. 'Tis getting to be very monotonous thing with me indeed, feel to be a common *loafer*.

April 26. Sunday. Inspection arms, policing camp, etc., after which Rev. Mr. Renfro preached one of his usual interesting sermons from Psalms 97 - 1. The Lord reign. Made a proposition to furnish the Regt. with a weekly newspaper, religious, but not sectarian. Subscribed for 6 copies for our Co. Paper published at Atlanta, Ga. Am pestered this evening with very severe griping in my bowels. Got some pills and salts to take in the morning. Our Regt. went on picket this evening.

April 27. This is the most spring-like day we have had. A few more such will give everything quite a different appearance and with us agreeable. Feel better today. The Regt. returned from picket, nothing new from the Yankees but little talking across now, however one of their sentinels said to one of ours, if he had a chance he would shoot ole Abraham, therefore, they are getting tired of the war. Hope that shooting spirit will increase if there is any close in such a sentiment.

April 28. Another dark, dismal and drizzly day, very much to

the discomfiture of the soldier, however, as it is not raining very much our old field is filled with boys playing ball with an occasional yell that would do justice to at least such a number of Indians; but for something of this kind the camp would be the more irksome. No news of much interest in the papers now. Am getting very anxious to hear from home.

April 29. Was called to attention of our fighting impliments last night at 1 o'clock to be ready at a moment's warning. The enemy is said to be making a demonstration at Banks Ford. All things remained quiet until 7½ A . M. when cannonading was heard down the river, also small arms could be heard down the river. Also small arms could be heard a piece off from camp; heard in the evening that a large force had succeeded in crossing. Learn they are moving up the river rapidly.

April 30. Great excitement prevailed throughout the camps this morning. Rose at 3½ o'clock, struck tents, paced up and loaded wagons, rained slowly until near 12 M — when the sun shone out beautiful and warm. Many reports are now afloat. From reliable information learn heavy skirmishing is going on 6 or 8 miles above here on the river, perhaps in Gen. Posey's Brig. Our Regt. has all gone on picket this evening, extending down near to Fred. Heard heavy cannonading below Fredericksburg.

May 1. Beautiful day, a little foggy, everything is in motion and very exciting, 8½ o'clock fog disappears. The enemy send up their balloon, their drums are plainly heard opposite our camps across the river. Expect the battle to open every moment; on our left our troops are concentrating there. First gun fired at 11½ A. M. Our Brig. is now in the east of camps ½ mile waiting for our Regt. to be withdrawn from the picket line. At last they come in and proceeded towards the firing which was about 4 or 5 miles distant. Started in that direction ahead of our Regt., obtained permission of Dr. Taylor to follow our Regt. at will. The Regt. passed while we were at Dr. Taylor's hospital. Set out after our Brig. Overtook them about 2 miles off. Took position in some ditches a short while. Threw out skirmishes and soon followed by the whole Brig., followed on ½ mile after sunset when in ½ mile of river turned back for Dr. Taylor's hospital which T. B., J. H. and a man

who had accidentally shot his finger and myself reached about 9 o'clock.

May 2. Had a pretty good night's rest. Our Brig. was ordered back to Banks Ford and passed us at 2 o'clock this morning. Set out after daylight for our Regt. Went through by old camp. Called at a miserable hut but however asked for breakfast which we luckily obtained. About 10 minutes after 8 A. M. firing commenced about 1 mile west of where we were last night when we turned back. Went on in pursuit of our Regt. but just before we found it learned the Brig. would rendezvous where they did yesterday. Turned our course for Dr. Taylor's quarters which was out on the plank road in sight of the place of rendezvous, arrived there 11½ o'clock A. M. Lay around there until 4 P. M. when the Brig. was ordered to take their former position. T. H. B. went back while I remained. The firing has been very regular up to this time when it commenced. Many reports are coming in, all very favorable. About this time a few heavy guns are heard below Fred. Can't say from whom (perhaps our signal). Small arms are plainly heard up on the river at six o'clock this evening.

May 3. Sunday. The Yankees' chosen day for battle. More or less fighting about Chancellorsville. General Earley's Div. was all turned back last night to attend to these crossings before Fred. which so far, 7 o'clock this morning turns out to be a feint, at least but little firing heard in that direction. The firing in front of Chans. was resumed at an early hour this morning very rapid and continuous, very clear and pretty strong wind from the south. Still the firing is distinctly heard. All are anxiously awaiting but sanguine of the results. 'Tis said Gen. Lee has them now right where he wants them and the news is altogether confirming. A A. M. Gen. Early begins to test whether 'tis a feint or not at Fred. Gen. Wilcox takes position in the ditches at Dr. Taylor's and to the right, went down about this time, found our Regt. in the upper ditch. Gen. Barksdale's Brig. in the lower one and the Yankees between the canal and river thick and crossing rapidly at Fred. & below. Are now becoming satisfied 'tis not a feint by no means. Very desperate fighting is now going on to our right. About 10 minutes to 11 o'clock A. M. our Brig. (in particular our Regt.) was ordered to move by the right flank while T. H. B. and my-



self moved by the *other*. About this time Barksdale's line was charged and broke in and our Brig. was ordered to fall back. Very good order was observed. Stopped at the fork of the road or just below on the plank. We got reinforcements. Our Brig. turned back to the brick Ch., formed line of battle and soon met the Yankees and a most desperate fight issued from 5 P. M. until near night. Drove the Yankees back to this toll gate with great slaughter.

May 4. Daylight presents a sad and very distressing spectacle around our Brig. Hospital. The work of amputation is now fully begun. Three tables are constantly filled with the groaning subjects, enough too, to excite all the sympathy within the human breast. Had one amputation in my company. Wm. Pope had his left thigh taken off near his knee. Wm. Staples is mortally wounded. T. F. Russell is badly wounded in hip and thigh. Several others slightly wounded. Wm. Allen and A. M. Lyon are killed A. Crowson, T. Martin, W. O. Wesson & H. H. Stoveall when the Regt. turned back or at least when it halted yesterday. I went on with Dr. Taylor's ambulances to where he established his hospital. Got Rev. Mr. Renfro's horse, went back while the fight was raging as near as I dared to go at least to where the balls were cutting up the dust, remained there until night when the firing ceased. Went up to the Church where I met our Regt., learned all the particulars I could. T. J. Hunt and myself went back to the hospital. Got off to bed in an old crib 11 P. M. There was some cannonading and pretty heavy too occasionally toward Fred., some but not much about Chans. At 5½ P. M. it was very brisk out there for a little while. Reports from all directions are very favorable, presume the victory at both or rather all places is complete. Made a dispatch to Selma Reporter and sent by Capt. Ragan. 'Tis an eventful and ever memorable day with me being another birthday of mine spent in the War which too rolls around my 40th year. Later this eve heavy cannonading is on the river below Dickerson red house.

May 5. Some little firing last night among the big guns. Some Regt. of our Brig. took a good many prisoners last night near our old camps. What were not taken were not to be found anywhere on this side the river or anywhere in this neighborhood. Went up to the brick church where our Regt. has been

in position since the engagement. Found them employed in guarding prisoners, gathering up and burying the dead. Had quite a pile of Yankees, Found the body of A. M. Lyon today. Received orders to fall in. Went down to the toll gate, remained there until 2 or 3 P. M. Ordered in the direction of Chans., about this time a very heavy rain set in, rained until night. Struck camp about 8 o'clock. Our boys found their Yankee rubber cloths of great use; having lost all their knapsacks when they fell back from the ditches. They were very eager to supply themselves at the first opportunity which the most of them did amply. But little cannonading through the night.

May 6. Still very cloudy and even raining slowly and very cold. Cannonading has commenced to the right of this road (plank) seemingly not more than 2 miles off. Our Brig. is ordered in that direction. Others are also making their way there too, however unpleasant the weather all hands seem to step full and cheerful, the news is cheering from that quarter. Gen. Jackson is said to have them surrounded by entrenchments. Remained with our ordinance wagon which stopped one mile this side of Chancellorsville. The firing ceased gradually. Our Brig. was soon ordered back to our camps which place we reached about 5 P. M. Still raining more or less. Quite a stir fixing up with Yankee tents, rubber cloths, etc., as best they can, our baggage wagons not having returned from the rear. However much rain falls and inclement the wind blows all seem to be jubilant over their great victory, especially after seeing the battlefield about Chancellorsville, their gigantic fortifications, the immense army stores captured, etc., etc. —

May 7. Everything is very quiet this morning. The booming of big guns has once more ceased and nature once more permitted to roll on as it were uninterrupted. Raining occasionally, however unpleasant each and every one is eager to tell what occurred to his *certain knowledge*. Bagge wagons returned late this evening with cooking utensils, a few [     ?     ] etc. Fixed up better for the inclement weather. Took a stroll to view the opposite side of the river, saw but few Yanks.

May 8. Still very quiet. Learn there is going to be an exchange of wounded prisoners at Banks Ford today. Took a stroll over the battlefield on this side of the plank road with

R. T. J. Find a great deal of sign (sound) timber literally shot to pieces with small arms. There are a great many guns and accoutrements picked up and stacked all along the line. Great waste follows great battles. Learn this evening something was lacking about the exchanging the prisoners, hence no exchange.

May 9. Very beautiful day. Spring is once more presented in all its loveliness. Bright sun up today and a few others will soon clothe this heretofore cold and desolate region in its green mantle, so much desired by both man and beast. Took a stroll down to our ditches or *starting* point of today a week ago. Viewed the Yankees across the river who appeared to be very busy passing to-and-fro with their wagons and  
Heard Gen. Lee's order or proclamation. Send this evening 9 Regt. to observe tomorrow in W\_\_\_\_\_

May 10. Sunday. Another fine day. Had inspection arms, afterwards preaching by Rev. Mr. Renfro from I Cor. 15 - 51. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, etc. Wrote a letter today to my Hostess Mrs. Macgill, Hagerstown, Md. Went over near Dr. Taylor's where the Yankee wounded were. Met a surgeon who promised to mail my letter. Had a good long confab with several of the surgeons. All seem to agree there was great slaughter among the Yanks. This has been the warmest day this spring. Almost summer. All vegetation is putting forth rapidly.

May 11. Got a horse and went out to see the battlefield around Chancellorsville. Have never seen such defenses, varied, etc. It seems to one not skilled in the art of war to say the least, to be a solid mass of barricaded confusion, especially after our boys began to press them out of their dens. Nearly all the woods have since been burned over where there was any fighting, either by the shell or set on purpose to assist in covering their retreat, which was in great confusion from the signs, guns, knapsacks, accoutrements, etc., strown to the river 75,000 guns.

May 12. Very beautiful spring-like day. Very much appreciated after so much bad weather. Started my application and recommendation for a transfer as Q. M. to Talladega Co. to collect the taxes in kind. Was favored by every com. officer



in the Regt., which am ever grateful for whether I get the transfer or not. The transferring the wounded Yankees to their own side of the river has been going on for a day or two, are pretty well done this evening. Wrote D. B. a letter today. Had no mail today for our Co. but little news anyway. All things quiet.

May 13. Was threatened with rain last night but the sun rose beautiful this morning and bids fare for another fine day. Set out early to see Capt. Cook, found him very bad. Leaned the board of Phasians at Gen. Anderson's headquarters was to meet today, who I will have to go before before my papers will go to War Department and hence I soon set out in search of that place; learned before reaching there the board would not meet, turned about and made my way back to camp. Had a hasty shower this evening.

May 14. Some little rain last night and is very cloudy this morning and even raining a little occasionally. Our Regt. is out on picket, hope it will not rain much as it is very disagreeable. Strolled down on the river near our line, never saw any Yanks. They seem to have all moved down opposite Fred. Everything is remarkably quiet now on their side. Capt. Truss and Blewster returned with Co. this evening (19th). They report some of our boys back already that were taken prisoners.

May 15. Very free day but quite cool, almost frost. Lt. Johnson and myself went down to see Capt. Cook. Found him very low, remained until after noon. He appeared a little better, but nothing permanent. Got a good dinner, corn bread, vegetables, etc. Received a letter from Kate, larned there had been great excitement about the Yankee raid that attempted to pass through our state (with every person in the whole country but wax into them.

May 16. Clear and cool and windy, more like fall than spring. Received our *things* from Richmond, coffee, sugar, cups, plates, knives and forks, etc., etc. Bill \$27.00. Borrowed Mr. Renfro's horse and made my way to General Anderson's headquarters. Leanred my papers have gone on up to War Department. Made but little tarry. Saw a good many fine horses, well kept in-

deed, etc. After my return learned of Dr. Taylor about my papers. Hope they have gone the right direction and will soon be heard from.

May 17. Another fine day and Sabbath. Expect preaching today by Rev. Mr. Renfro but a visit to where Capt. Cook is with my friend Capt. Truss will deprive me of the benefit of it. Found the Capt. better and even have some hope, however Dr. Taylor says there is none for him. Got a good dinner, corn bread, vegetables, asparagus, etc., relished it very much. Find several signal stations around here and learn Gen. Hood's Div. is above on the river and Gen. Longstreet is below. Expect a forward move.

May 18. This our picket day has rolled around, seemingly too soon, however 'tis so and the Regt. must go this evening at 2½ o'clock. Brig. drill in the morning and picket duty in the evening is putting in duty pretty tight. Everything in this vicinity is very quiet. Went out to our post, saw few blue bellies at the lower post below Banks Ford, none above. Saw they were anxious to change papers but made no change while I stayed, returned to camp by sunset.

May 18. Very cool again this morning. Wind from the north about 10 o'clock A. M. Heard several cannon a little west of north a great way off. Can't say whether they are signal guns or not. Had milk and butter for dinner in camp today. Gen. Huey & Capt. Cook's Lady arrived today. News from home is all cheerful, crops very good especially wheat. Our boys got a Phil. paper of yesterday while on picket. Great efforts are being made to smooth their late reverses.

May 20. All things around being very quiet this morning adds to the serenity, beauty and grandeur of the season. All the vegetation is putting forth rapidly. Forest leaves are nearly grown. Learn today, too late to go before the board, my papers have been returned, so that ordeal will now have to wait until Saturday before they can be started aright. Am getting impatient. See from today's papers detailed accounts of the battles in Miss. and expect more hard fighting there soon.

May 21. Have a report in this morning that our forces are

crossing the river between here and Culpepper near the latter place. 'Tis beautiful weather indeed for an army to move. Received the intelligence of the death of Capt. Cook. He died at 8 o'clock A. M. His body was sent to Hamilton's Crossing this evening. Received a letter from Kate this evening, was pleased to hear all were well and Felix had got home but sorry to hear the plough stock were so skinned up and even crippled.

May 22. News of yesterday unimportant, however fear Gen. Pemberton has not been so successful as might have been. Went out to witness Brig. drill, could plainly hear Yankee arms. Expect grand reviews are going on and great efforts are being made to keep up appearances. The balance of the day passed off rapidly, lying around sleeping in the shade. Saw an elderly lady very busy going around through the Regt. of our Brig. principally in the 11 Ala. Regt.

May 23. Clear, very still and warm. Summer seems to have rushed in all at once. Walked over to Gen. Anderson's headquarters, met the board, my *case* was to be laid before General Anderson as to whether he wanted to approve the application on account of *light duty* or not. Was very kindly treated by the board. Found it very warm stretching across the old fields. News of today very discouraging, fear our forces there, Vicksburg, will have to do some desperate fighting to sustain or even extricate themselves.

May 24. Another Sabbath has rolled around. Clear and exceedingly warm. Attended preaching in the 9th Regt. Quite a good turnout. Went with J. L. D. to Mr. Tonsile's for dinner, by a very tight *squeeze* got a nice one. No news from the West of importance. From private sources hear of the casualties of the 30th Regt. occasionally. Nothing as yet has shown very much fighting by that Regt.; however, expect ere this they have been into it as well as all that army.

May 25. Quite a stir in camp today paying off the Regt. generally which always produces more or less a gratifying, stirring time, at least more so than that which is brought about on the eve of battle (fall in). This evening's news is very cheering from the West, however, 'tis not altogether reliable,

but hope, fond hope is want to catch at everything that is the least favorable. Received a letter from Nettie of 28th ult. by L. E. S. He has been sick on the way, hence the delay. Very cool this morning.

May 26. Very cool and cloudy. Fire is very pleasant, in fact, too cool to do without. T. H. B. and myself strolled down to Mr. Robey's, got a nice dinner. Met Col. Sanders and Caldwell who *wanted* dinner too but failed. Learned Gen. Wilcox went to Rich. today. Expect he will be promoted. Had some stir among the officers in our Regt. on the Caldwell matter [ ? ]. Received a letter from A. J. C. today. All well and Kate was there (18) on a visit.

May 27. Yet cloudy this morning but some appearance of clearing off, turning warmer. Lt. C. is gone to Rich. today, no news of interest yesterday, especially from Vicksburg. Am again quite anxious to hear from that quarter. Was ordered to draw 3 days' rations and cook them immediately but before getting under headway the order was countermanded. Learn there was a cavalry fight up the river this morning. News from Vicksburg good again this evening.

May 28. Everything remains very quiet, presume there was nothing but a cavalry skirmish yesterday which never amounts to much. Received a letter from Billy yesterday of the 18th inst. Was proud to learn they were all well at home. Wrote to Lizzie today. Went down to the river and took a bath. No one offered to molest or make us afraid, however, saw 2 Yanks on the other bank with horses who soon as we pitched in moved their horses fearing we might swim over and get them. No news this evening. The Regt. went out on picket.

May 29. Received orders last night to cook 1 day's rations and be ready to move at a moment's warning. We are ready this morning but (no) orders to move as yet. (8 A. M.) There is evidently something afloat. Their balloons are occasionally to be seen and artillery moving up to the heights near Banks Ford. Whether they intend crossing again or a pretence to cover their retreat is the question. Prefer to think the latter is more plausible, however, a few days will tell.

May 30. Daylight finds our Regt. snug enough in the ditches near Banks Ford. The Yanks are busily engaged in throwing up earthworks, but as they are not ready yet, hence our Regt. came back to breakfast. There was but little or no news the balance of the day, but many grapevine reports and piney woods suggestions as to what is culminating in the future. No news from Vicksburg today. Am getting anxious to hear from that quarter.

May 31. Was again called to get ready to march at a moment's warning and rest on arms till daylight (At 12 o'clock) Learn the 11th Regt. went down to see what was the occasion. The Yanks were very busy near Banks Ford felling timber, etc., so as to use the canal as breastworks. Had preaching today at 10 A. M. by Rev. Mr. Bell of Alabama and was to have a sermon in the afternoon by Mr. Renfro but the wind has blown down the arbor. Late in the evening went to view the Yanks. They are busily galloping round.

June 1. All things are very quiet this morning. Strengthened our picket last night by sending 10 men and 1 sergeant from each co. Mr. A. Barber and J. B. B. came in today. Left home a week ago today. They bring good news, wheat crop very good. Harvesting had already begun before they left. Received a letter from Kate stating she . . new biscuit for breakfast on Sunday morning before they left (24). The health of the country was very good. No new cases of small-pox up to that time.

June 2. Have had another quiet night. At last everything seems to have returned to its former sluggishness of ordinary camp duties. Brig. drill, etc. Arranged the papers for J. B. Bell substituting J. J. H. Mr. Barber is listed on the same for *Lawler*. Our Regt. went out on picket this evening. See a good many blue bellies herd their horses on the other side of the river. No news from Vicksburg very reliable. Still hope eager, lays hold of every little item however small.

June 3. Took a stroll with Mr. Barber and Boatright along our picket line. Could see about Banks Ford a good many Yankees what they had been doing for several nights that had caused the trouble in our camps for the last few nights, the



timber has all been felled between the canal and river so as to prevent our getting across, also to use the canal as a ditch. While down there a lady on horseback came down to the ford accompanied by two officers. Our boys exchanged papers, etc., while on post.

June 4. All quiet and still this morning. Drilling in Bat. etc. . from orders and inquiries look for a move soon, and as I have not heard from my application offered my resignation this morning favorably endorsed by Col. Forney. About 12 o'clock M. . received an order to fall in quick and go to Banks Ford. Was off immediately. Marched out on the high hills in plain view of the enemy and then filed off into the woods. Remained an hour or two and returned to camp without any loss this time.

June 5. Some appearance of rain this morning. All things remain very quiet. Other artillery has come in and taken position between this and Banks Ford. We are again becoming anxious to hear from Vicksburg. Heard nothing yesterday. Cannonading opened pretty brisk below Fred. about  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 6 P. M. and ceased in an hour. About 9 P. M. received orders to cook two days' rations, pack up and be ready to move at a moment's warning. Was trying to sleep and was of course disturbed. Many reports are to the future movements.

June 6. All astir this morning but did not move until  $\frac{1}{2}$  after 7 A. M., then the Regt. went down near Fred. Took position with T. H.'s wagon and ordinance and medical wagons. Went out on the plank road, thence toward Fred. halted within  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles. Went in search of the Regt. Afternoon. Found it was in a wood between \_\_\_\_\_ and Dr. Taylor's. Strolled down toward Fred. before finding it to the heights where I had a beautiful view. Yankees appear very busy. Hear an occasional report from their guns, even see them.

June 7. Cleared off quite cool after the shower yesterday evening. Everything quiet up to 7 o'clock A. M., when the Yanks fired a gun or two below Fred. answered by one still below. Strolled down to the heights on the left of the plank road to where our Regt. was on picket. (Dr. Taylor's, thence came to Fred.) The whole Regt. fills this space. Found our

Co. at the Factory. Co. E. from there to town. Went down through towards the Fitzgerald place, etc.

June 8. All things appear as they were. Across the river they keep up appearances and a might drumming over there. Went down to the Gen. Anderson's quarters after my last set of papers, got them approved there and withdrawn thence. While there went down on the heights, had a splendid view. Could plainly see what Yankees that have come over. They seem to be entrenched, still the knowing ones do not think they are going to make a fight on this side of the river. 'Tis said Gen. Longstreet is crossing above and below Culpepper Ch. today.

June 9. Clear and quite cool this morning, everything is as quiet as ever. Still a considerable drumming could be heard last night and this morning over among them seemingly disturbed Yanks. The best judges here think they are keeping up appearances here while their main force is gone to meet Gen. Longstreet or are preparing to get further. Firing is heard a long way off up the river early this morning. Obtained a pass to Rich. of Dr. Taylor, got L. H. to carry me down to Guinen (?) station was *directed*. Got a passport and set out on 2 P. M. train. Arrived Rich. at 5 P.M.

June 10. Fine morning. News was cheering from Vicksburg. Learn Gen. Stuart met the Yanks yesterday near Culpepper C. H. and drove them back across the river. My friend Dr. Clark and myself went in search of my old application for a transfer, also concerning my resignation. No papers have yet arrived. Have to send my resignation back and let it take the regular course to Gen. Hill thence to Gen. Lee. Strolled around the city a little looking at the [     ?     ] of the city. Learn Jim Stuart had a desperate Cavalry fight yesterday. Over 300 prisoners came in.

June 11. Cloudy and warm this morning. News from Vicksburg by an officer of ours who escaped from the Yanks is cheering. The Yanks say as Johnston is in their rear, sudden death awaits them in front and annihilation in rear. Sent my resignation to Col. Forney by Mr. Killough Co. B. 10th Ala. Wrote to Kate, Josh. Morriss and Tom Coleman which kept

me pretty busy 'til dinner after which strolled around the balance of the day. From the casualties of General Stewart's forces, engaged the other day, fear he made another Drainsville affair of it.

June 12. The city is as quiet or more so this morning than usual. Went with my friend Capt. Farmer to Ala. baggage Depot to get my blanket left at Sharpsburg, thence to a hat establishment or manufactory, bought one at \$15. Capt. Farmer saw D. B. in passing Wilsonville who informed him all were well and getting on well. The news of the wheat crop is very cheering. The news came in this evening of an advance of the Yanks on the peninsula, some rush of troops down there last night.

June 13. A rumor from Vicksburg in morning papers is that Gen. Walker has reached there with reinforcements, while we have Yankees' account of its capture, both need confirmation. Went down to the War Department in search of my old papers. After much inquiry at last found they had been received on the 6th inst. and filed in the proper place but learned the appointments had been already made but not confirmed, however they are virtually made. 'Tis too large a business for me anyway. The State is laid off into 8 districts.

June 14. Sabbath. Rather cool for the season, the weather is certainly as changeable here as in Ala. if not more so. Visited Capitol square from the busy throng going to Sabbath school then to \_\_\_\_\_ and from the silks that some damsels display, one would conclude naturally there was no war going on, however, a great number of these selfsame ones are thus paraded in deep mourning but as this is more or less in almost every family, it seems to follow as a matter of course. Visited the Oakwood Cemetery, there viewed in Regt. array the many thousands graves.

June 15. Bright sun this morning with not a cloud above, expect quite a warm day. The streets are as usual thronged with women and children. Met Lt. Calhoun. He left two weeks ago. Have news from home to that date. All were well. Were in full blast cutting wheat crop. Very good but had been injured by a rain storm in our neighborhood. Corn crop is



looking very fine and generally in good order. Strolled around town and passed the time rather dull. Met two members from M. D. Boil.

July 16. Warm, still clear and very dusty. Met Col. Caldwell just from the Army of Northern Va. Left the Regt. yesterday at Chancellorsville en route for Culpepper. He went with me to look after my first lot of papers for the purpose of making application direct to the War Department (at the suggestion of Col. Withers). Obtained my papers at last, made out my application but too late, the office closed about twenty minutes before we got there. Went down to the Navy Yard.

June 17. Set about the matter of business (tendering resig.), at 11 o'clock A. M. got a hack. Dr. Clark and myself went up to War Department, had an interview with Judge Campbell who informed us I would have to go before a board here. Immediately sought one and found it only meets Mondays and Fridays, hence am out on that *hook* until day after tomorrow. Called on Mr. Peebles who has the appointment of Post Q. M. of our District, perhaps make me some propositions. Strolled around town, felt bad and restless of *course*.

June 18. Terrible hot day. News from Winchester is very cheering capture of Hilroy (2) and nearly all his forces, etc. Nothing from Vicksburg of any importance, begin to have some uneasiness. Late news on the bulletin board is that Port Hudson has been attacked 27 times and last time our forces followed them and spiked their siege guns and our forces [ ? ] both there and at Vicksburg had plenty of provisions and were in good spirits. Found our boys Russell and Pope at Hayns Factory Hospital. T. F. Russell was not doing so well. Pope was tolerable.

June 19. Had a fine rain last night and this morning, the air is very much cooled. Went before the board was *burst*ed. Recommended to wait on my old application of resignation but got my friend P to take my application for transfer and my new or direct application of resignation to Col. Withers who promised to give my final discharge tomorrow. Took a stroll afternoon in search of Lt. Calhoun, found him at last.

Wishes to go with me home. Will wait until Monday if we cannot get off sooner.

June 20. Cloudy and very pleasant this morning. Strolled down to Capitol Square to await the hour of 10, saw that a cabinet shop on Franklin St. near the Square had been burned since six o'clock this morning. Ventured into the War Department, to my surprise and admiration was soon furnished my final papers looked after and final settlement. Thence to passport office, thence to Messrs. Hill and Nofleet and bought \$2,050 worth of tobacco. Arranged Lt. Calhoun and my bag — and all other preparations to leave. News from all directions good especially Gen. Lee.

June 21. Sabbath. Cloudy and misting rain. Arrived at the Petersburg Depot in good time. Set out at 6 o'clock to Wilson, arrived there at 3½ P. M. Set out thence to Warsaw at 4 P. M. The train was very much crowded. There has been some rain along the road, hence the dust not added to our crowded condition. Nothing occurred of any note. Crops generally look well. Wheat is generally ripe and being cut in several fields but full night came on us long before reaching Goldsboro, run slow all the time.

June 22. This morning at 2 o'clock arrived at Warsaw where I was crowded out of the stage running from this place to Fayetteville hence have to lay over here twenty-four hours. Strolled around and spent the time best I could. In the afternoon went out on the plank road, gathered some wortle berries, the great staple of this state, especially at this season of the year. The citizens of place and vicinity are daily expecting a raid of the Yanks but are but little troubled.

June 23. Set out this morning at 2 o'clock in a hack for Fayetteville, arrived at 2 P. M. After dinner went in search of Mr. Geo. McNiel. Found him a pleasant old gentleman but slow. Went down with him to his mill. They were going ahead making thread, suiting, etc. He said he would consider on my proposition until morning. Went to my hotel. The (left  
) house got supper, took a smoke and retired for the night for I was very tired and sleepy.

June 24. Beautiful morning, ever memorable day this, two years ago left my home for the seat of war in Va. Learned after being referred from Mr. McNiel to Mr. Haul, thence to Geo. W. Williams Co. that the thread and cloth trade was no go. Strolled back to my hotel. Met several acquaintances of Mr. Thrift, Bledsoes, Formans and Freemans. Spent the evening tolerable pleasant but became anxious to be travelling as my mission was out. Some rain this evening.

June 25. Raining and quite cool. Set out at 8 o'clock A. M. for the boat, got there in good time. Set out down the river at 8½ very small boat indeed and luckily was not crowded. Arrived at Wilmington at 11½ o'clock P. M. Remained on board the balance of the night. This is a very narrow and muddy little river. Saw but very few farms and but few ferries. Presume the people in this country do their visiting across the river in bottoms as they are very plenty. This the place for whortles.

June 26. Find myself this morning at the wharf of Wilmington just below where the boat ferries over passengers and freight from one R. R. to the other. Saw two gun boats and several seagoing vessels. One captured here the other day supposed to belong to the Yankees. See lots of cotton around here and going in. Set out at 6½ o'clock A. M. for Kingston 171 miles. Arrived in due time (7 o'clock P. M.), took the Branchville train at 7½, arrived at 12 P. M. Saw plenty of corn in silk and tassel, plenty of rain.

June 27. Arrived in Augusta at 5 o'clock A. M. See a good deal of building going on here, Confederate I presume. Set out for Atlanta at 7 A. M. Very warm and cloudy. Plenty of rain, in fact, too much from Wilmington on thus far. A Union point the ladies have dinner prepared every day free for soldiers to any disabled 'tis on board. They (the ladies) go down to Greensboro, there meet the other train and fold back. Arrived at Atlanta at a ¼ to 7 P. M., remained 30 minutes and set out for West Point, rain all along.

June 28. At daylight found ourselves in 30 miles of Montgomery. Soon a desperate rain came on us, all the flats were covered in water, by then we got to town. Soon after we ar-

rived, the rain ceased. After breakfast went to express office there, learned my tobacco had not been received. Gave instructions to have it shipped to Selma. Learn after the boat arrived (11 o'clock A. M.) that we could not get off until 8 P. M., however, left the hall and went down and engaged passage. Set off down the river at 8½ P. M.

June 29. Fine morning, had a good night's sleep. Feel very much refreshed. The river is very muddy and rising. Fear we are having too much rain for the crops, however, up to the present corn is looking fine which is almost the only growing crop in Ala. Arrived at Selma also too late for the train (11 A. M.) See a great many men on the streets but few acquaintances.

Notes in the back of the book:

Page 1.

|                                     |         |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Travelling expenses back            | \$ 2.00 |
| From Rich. to Petersburg and Wilson | 6.00    |
| On Omnibus                          | 1.00    |
| thence to Warsaw                    | 6.00    |
| " " Fayetteville                    | 8.50    |
| " " Wilmington                      | 10.00   |
| " " Kingsville                      | 10.00   |
| " " Augusta                         | 4.00    |
| On Omnibus                          | .50     |
| thence to Atlanta                   | 8.00    |
| " " West Point                      | 5.50    |
| " " Montgomery                      | 4.25    |

Page 2.

|                                    |       |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Sheeting per yd. 75                | 1210  |
| Eating expenses from Richmond home |       |
| first day                          | 2.50  |
| Sec. " & hotel                     | 6.50  |
| third "                            | 1.50  |
| 4th & 5th & hotel                  | 11.00 |
| 6th & 7th                          | 8.00  |

Page 3.

Camp 10th Ala.  
June 9th 1863Pass Capt. John Oden Co. K. 10th Ala.  
Regt. to hospital at Richmond.W. Taylor  
Surgeon  
10th Ala. Regt.Geo. W. Williams & Co.  
Fayetteville, N. C.

Page 4.

May 15th 1863

Surg. Gaston

This will be handed to you by Capt. Oden of the 10th Ala. Va. G. who appears before the "Divis Med. Examiners" on certificate of disability. In my opinion he will not be again fit for field service. Though eminently qualified for the duties of the position for which he applies.

He is anxious to get his papers forwarded as soon as possible.

Very respectfully  
W. Taylor  
Surgeon  
10th Ala. Va. G.

Page 5.

Capt. Oden and Mr. Hunt of the 10th Ala. Regt. have permission to return to the wagon train tonight.

May  
1st  
1863

J. G. Montgomery  
Asst. Surgeon  
10th Ala. Regt.

Capt. Oden and Sergt. Brasher of the 10th Ala. Regiment have permission to follow the Regiment at will as they are both unwell from wounds.

May 1st  
1862

W. Taylor  
Surgeon  
10th Ala. Vol.

Approved  
W. H. Forney  
Col. 10th Ala.

## Page 6.

Money received to carry home

|               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| S. Hunt       | \$1,000.00 |
| L. M. Wilson  | 500.00     |
| R. H. Johnson | 20.00      |
| A. N. Crowson | 20.00      |

Left camp with only \$30.00 it Crowson & Johnsons

Michael Mizzles

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| Received at Hospital | 18.00 |
|----------------------|-------|

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10 Boxes Mayo's bb Crimps \$1.00

|      |            |
|------|------------|
| 1190 | \$1,190.00 |
|------|------------|

|                       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| 1 Box Solace 20 @ \$3 | 60.00 |
|-----------------------|-------|

|                                  |        |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| 12 Kedins Refur. Choice 264 @ 77 | 203.28 |
|----------------------------------|--------|

|                       |        |
|-----------------------|--------|
| 5 Boxes P. B. 315 150 | 472.50 |
|-----------------------|--------|

## Page 7.

Richard E. Cross

Lancaster, N. H.

5th Regt.

Make inquiry for Jeremiah Dumas

Society Hill Macon City, Ala. of Dr. Taylor

H. H. Long

Hagerstown, Md.

W. L. Small

Hagerstown, Md.

Chas. G. W. Macgill, M. D.

Hagerstown, Md.

Miss Emma F. Brent

Baltimore, Md.

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LT. DAVID MONIAC, CREEK INDIAN:  
FIRST MINORITY GRADUATE OF WEST POINT

by

Benjamin Griffith

On September 18, 1817, one of the unlikeliest cadets ever to enter the United States Military Academy at West Point became the first Indian to be admitted to the Academy. He was David Moniac, then fifteen years, eight months of age, who had traveled from a Lower Creek village on Pinchona Creek, near the trail which had become the Federal Road in the present Montgomery County, Alabama. He had come by way of Washington City, where he had been tutored for a brief period by an Irishman named John McLeod.<sup>1</sup>

Even with his transitional period of instruction, the culture shock must have been startling for young Moniac. At about the age of fifteen, as had all boys in his Creek village, Moniac had probably undergone the rite of passage that initiated him into manhood. During the ceremony, which could last from twelve days to eight moons, the youth was isolated from the rest of the community. Other than the ritual roots and herbs, he ate little except a few spoonfuls of a gruel made from coarsely ground corn. On the first day he also ate two handfuls of Sou-watch-cau, a bitter root which had the effect of intoxicating and temporarily maddening. He also boiled the leaves of this hallucogenic plant in water and drank the tea-like liquid. The purpose was to stimulate visions, rendering the candidate more receptive to the teachings of the leader who instructed the youth in all that was considered proper for him to know. At a later period in the initiation, the young man drank the possau, a drink made from boiling the button snakeroot, a potent emetic that induced violent vomiting and hence further purgation. Near the end of the ceremony, the candidate burned corn cobs and rubbed the ashes over his body. He then sweated under blankets and finally went to the river for a ceremonial cleansing, now purified from the pollution of

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<sup>1</sup>Peter A. Brannon, "David Moniac," *Arrow Points*, XIII (1928), 41.



juvenility.<sup>2</sup>

On the banks of the Hudson, far from the Tallapoosa and Alabama Rivers that he knew so well, Cadet Moniac must have been acutely puzzled at the mores, attitudes, and alien culture of his fellow cadets. He may not, however, have been surprised by the then-mild hazing of lower classmen; for public humiliation was one of the principal ways in which Creek mothers instilled discipline in their sons. If physical punishment was needed for a minor infraction, it was administered by lightly scratching the boy's dry skin with a sharp, pointed instrument. This "dry-scratching" was particularly humiliating because it left abrasions or light scars on the skin for several days or weeks so that all could see and taunt the child about them.<sup>3</sup>

Cadet Moniac, in the fencing classes at West Point, probably had a less anxious attitude about blood-letting than did his classmates. Creek Indian mothers, for serious offense, would scratch the legs and thighs of their sons with the jawbone of a gar fish or tooth of a snake until they bled. The Creeks believed that this practice had both a physical and emotional efficacy. It was thought to loosen the skin and give a pliancy to the limbs and, as one anthropologist put it, "the profusion of blood that follows the operation serves to convince the child that the loss of blood is not attendant with danger or loss of life," so that "when he becomes a man or a warrior he need not shrink from an enemy."<sup>4</sup> Who knows what story is concealed in the crisply worded Post Orders of March 24, 1822, which lists Moniac among a number of cadets in the First Class who have been "organized in a fencing section under the direction of Sword Master Thomas every morning from sunrise to breakfast in front of the North Barrack."<sup>5</sup>

Moniac's arrival at the Academy as the stone North Bar-

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<sup>2</sup>Benjamin Hawkins, *A Sketch of the Creek Country in the Years 1798 and 1799* Collections of the Georgia Historical Society (Savannah, 1848), III, 78-79.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville, 1976), 324.

<sup>4</sup>John R. Swanton, *Social Organization and Social Usages of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy*, Reprinted with the permission of the Smithsonian Institution (New York, 1970), 363.

<sup>5</sup>Post Orders No. 2, 1822-1823, U. S. Military Academy Archives.



rack was being completed<sup>6</sup> coincided also with the beginning of a new era at West Point under its fifth superintendent, Sylvanus Thayer, who, in his term of office from 1817 to 1833, introduced a system of rules, a set curriculum, and disciplinary measures that are basically unchanged to the present day.<sup>7</sup> When Thayer came to the Academy, he perceived that firm admissions standards were an urgent necessity. Although a law had been passed in 1812 mandating an entrance examination and requiring applicants to be over fourteen years old, the law was ignored for political expediencies, and the Corps included twelve-year-olds, a one-armed boy from Pennsylvania, a married cadet from the same state who brought his wife along, and scores of cadets who had remained in the Corps for years without progressing beyond the first year's course of study. Thayer dismissed forty-three of these latter cadets, "most of whom," he wrote to the Secretary of War, "are deficient in natural abilities and all are destitute of those qualities which would encourage a belief that they can ever advance."<sup>8</sup>

Thayer followed the admissions standards precisely, rejecting between 30 and 60 per cent of the applicants despite an entrance examination so easy that one cadet was asked merely to define a fraction, read two and one-half lines from a history book, and write a dictated sentence on the blackboard.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps Thayer's most important contribution, however, was the instituting of a merit roll in which cadets were graded on all their activities, on the drill field as well as in the classroom, and assigned a mathematical average which gave each cadet a place on the Order of General Merit within his class. It was this final merit ranking that dictated a cadet's career assignment, whether he would be sent to the much coveted Corps of Engineers or the less to be desired cavalry, artillery, or infantry.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Edward Carlisle Boynton, *History of West Point and its Military Importance During the American Revolution and the Origin and Progress of the United States Military Academy* (New York, 1863), 255.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen E. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point* (Baltimore, 1966), 63.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 82-83.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 73.

Cadet Moniac's progress toward graduation, as recorded on the merit roll, was not without impediment. At the completion of his first year in June, 1818, he was turned back to the following Fourth Class by his request. This is somewhat surprising, for at that time Moniac ranked 19th in a class of 29 in the Order of General Merit. At the end of his second attempt at the Fourth Class, he ranked 48th in a class of 117; but the advantage of twice-told lectures was temporary, and as the weaker students dropped out of the struggle, Moniac drifted to 59th in a class of 87 in this third class year, 48th of 53 in the second class year,<sup>11</sup> and 39th of 42 in the final year. His graduation standing was 39th of 40.<sup>12</sup> The final examination, which primarily determined the graduation standing, was an ordeal in which each cadet was questioned for at least five hours by the entire faculty and the distinguished Board of Visitors. The oral examination covered all the courses in the four-year curriculum.

Cadet Moniac earned his highest ranking in conduct, 15th of 42 in his overall standing for the four years in that category. His best academic subjects were mathematics, where he ranked 27th, and tactics, where he was placed 33rd. In French he ranked at the bottom; in philosophy he out-ranked two other cadets in his class, in engineering only one.<sup>13</sup> Outside the classroom Moniac did make modest advancements in the military hierarchy. Battalion orders of August 30, 1820, appointed him Fourth Sergeant in the Second Company of cadets. On June 22, 1821, he was appointed First Sergeant, but the Battalion Orders seven days later carried the concise and unexplained statement, "Cadet Moniac resigned as First Sergeant of the Fourth Company of Cadets."<sup>14</sup> One wonders what pressures there were that led to his stepping down from a position of leadership.

The *Register of Delinquencies* at the Academy indicates that Cadet Moniac's few peccadillos mostly involved absenteeism and unauthorized visiting during study hours. He was certainly

<sup>11</sup>Academic Records, U. S. Military Academy Archives.

<sup>12</sup>Merit Roll of the First Class, June, 1822, Post Orders, No. 2, U. S. Military Academy Archives.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>Post Orders No. 1, 1817-1822, U. S. Military Academy Archives.

well within the limit of 200 demerits in a single year which led to a cadet's automatic dismissal.<sup>15</sup> He was five times listed as "absent in study hours," once each absent from Tattoo, Tactics, and Drill, and once "In bed after morning roll call." In his last two years at West Point he was cited five times for "visiting in study hours." He was once cited for "Neglect of duty in failing to sign the pay rolls" and once for "Disobedience of orders in not signing the pay rolls."<sup>16</sup> At another time Moniac, for failure to sign the pay roll, is cited along with other cadets in the Post Orders for May 1, 1820. "These Cadets did not sign the pay roll," the orders read, "because their pay was passed directly to their creditors. The Cadets were ordered to sign the pay roll by seven o'clock on the evening of May 1, at which time they received their pay, which was then applied to the payment of their debts."<sup>17</sup>

In the fall of 1818, David Moniac took part in a movement to oust the hot-tempered Captain John Bliss, Commandant of the Corps, whose duty it was to discipline the cadets and assign demerits. When, on November 22, Bliss grabbed a cadet from the ranks and "shook, jerked, and publicly damned" him, the Corps responded by electing a committee of five cadets to represent their grievances to the Superintendent. Moniac received no votes in the election, but one of the grievances was drawn up in a affidavit form and signed by D. Moniac and P. McCormick, stating that "we do hereby certify on honor, that on or about the 26th of October, 1818, Captain John Bliss, without the least possible provocation, did throw stones at us, and at several other cadets of the Military Academy."<sup>18</sup> The committee of five was dismissed from the Academy by Thayer as a mutinous consortium, and his action was later upheld by a court of inquiry and a congressional investigation.

One brief incident concerning Moniac at West Point is recorded in a book by Josiah Quincy. Former President Adams, Quincy relates, was visiting West Point to review the cadets,

<sup>15</sup>Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 74.

<sup>16</sup>Register of Delinquencies, 1819-1822, U. S. Military Academy Archives.

<sup>17</sup>Post Orders No. 1, 1817-1822. U. S. Military Academy Archives.

<sup>18</sup>*An Expose of Facts Concerning Recent Transactions Relating to the Corps of Cadets of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York* (Newburgh, N. Y., 1819), 14.

and the aging ex-President, then in his eighties, was being shown the corps. Major Worth, one of the Academy officials, "made an unsuccessful attempt to induce Moniac, the Indian Cadet, to be introduced to Mr. Adams and the ladies. At last he gave this up, saying, 'He is too bashful.'" The Major, apparently sensitive to Moniac's unwillingness to be singled out, added: "I have myself been taken for the Indian all along the road. People would point to me and say, 'Look there! there's the Indian!'"<sup>19</sup> If "*the* Indian" was Moniac, one gets a graphic picture of what life was like as an ethnic curiosity at the Military Academy at that time. Cadet Moniac must have been singled out often by the crowds when the Cadet Corps made its annual summer marches to Hudson, N.Y., in 1819, Philadelphia in 1820, and Boston in 1821. These marches were begun by Superintendent Thayer to gain publicity for the developing Academy, but the official reason given was to improve the health of the Cadets and add to their practical experience. The fancy uniforms, the martial music, and the expert precision of the marching cadets excited and impressed the citizens in towns and villages along the march routes.<sup>20</sup>

Following his graduation Moniac served for five months as a Brevet Second Lieutenant in the Sixth Infantry and then abruptly resigned his commission on December 31, 1822.<sup>21</sup> Many young graduates were resigning, for in 1821 Congress had exercised one of its periodic cuts in the size of the army, and the Academy was graduating more officers than the army could use. President Madison suggested that the extra men might well retire to private life, where they could impart the benefits of their training to the state militia,<sup>22</sup> and a large percentage of Brevet Second Lieutenants followed his advice. Moniac settled near his uncles, David Tate and William Weatherford, the latter the famous "Red Eagle," the adversary of Andrew Jackson in the Creek War of 1813-14. He married Mary Powell, the cousin of Osceola, the Seminole leader. From

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<sup>19</sup>Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past: From the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston, 1883), 92.

<sup>20</sup>Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 81-82.

<sup>21</sup>Capt. George W. Cullum, comp., *Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, N. Y., from March 16, 1802, to January 1, 1850* (New York, 1850), 113.

<sup>22</sup>*American State Papers: Military Affairs*, V, 350.

the time of his resignation until 1936, Moniac was a respected cotton farmer and breeder of thorough-bred race horses,<sup>23</sup> a passion he had inherited from his grandfather, a red-haired Scotsman named Charles Weatherford. He built a home near Little River in Baldwin County, Alabama. As one of his kinsman, Tom Tate Tunstall, wrote of him in a manuscript now in the United States Military Academy Archives: "He was a high toned chivalric gentleman & cordially esteemed by all who knew him. There was really nothing in his quiet life to distinguish him from the majority of the country gentlemen of his time & day."<sup>24</sup>

Jacob Rhett Motte, an army surgeon who knew Moniac during the Florida War, had a different assessment of Moniac's term of civilian life, attributing the resignation of his commission to a visit to his family, which "revived in his breast in all its former force the roving disposition of his people. Since then he has ranged with native freedom over the woods and plains, until the recent outbreak of the Indians afforded him an opportunity of showing his gratitude to the government which had fostered him in his youth."<sup>25</sup>

David Moniac apparently had few Indian racial characteristics. Dr. Motte tells of journeying, with Moniac as an escort, through the friendly part of the Creek nation and, passing through one of the towns that was still inhabited, was introduced by Moniac to his father, "a venerable old Indian," the respected Creek leader, Sam Moniac. Dr. Motte wrote that he was unaware, until that moment, that Moniac was "other than a white man."<sup>26</sup> This is understandable, for both David Moniac's grandfathers were white, Charles Weatherford, a Scotsman, and William (or Dixon) Moniac, referred to quaintly as a "Hollander." One of his grandmothers was a full-blooded Indian, the other a half-Indian of the Tuskegee tribe.

Such racial mixtures were not uncommon, for white traders

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<sup>23</sup>T. T. Tunstall, "David Moniac, Civil History," Manuscript in U. S. Military Academy Archives.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>Jacob Rhett Motte, *Journal Into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and Field During the Creek and Seminole Wars 1836-1838*, ed. James F. Sunderman (Gainesville, Fla., 1953), 22.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*



and adventurers had begun filtering into the Creek nation at a very early date. Charles Weatherford moved in among the Creeks shortly after the Revolution.<sup>27</sup> Precise records are lacking to indicate the percentage of Caucasians in the Creek nation, but it was probably less than ten per cent. The writer and visitor to the Creeks Caleb Swan set the white population in 1790 among the Creeks at 300, a number, he added, "sufficient to contaminate all the natives."<sup>28</sup> Historical accounts of the Creeks are liberally sprinkled with such names as Burgess, Cornell, Galphin, Grizzard, Kinnard, McIntosh, McQueen, Milfort, Moniac, Perryman, Sullivan, Walker, and Weatherford. There is, however, nothing to indicated that the Creeks discriminated against the whites or their mestizo offspring. Since descent was determined through the female line rather than by the paternal method used by white society, the father's ethnic background meant little to the Creeks.<sup>29</sup> The Indians, as Peter Farb points out, had a well-established system of adopting new members into the tribes. Often prisoners of war were adopted by Indian families to replace husbands or sons who were battle casualties. The adopted person was completely integrated into his new society, having a new set of parents, kinsmen, ceremonial societies, and allegiances transferred to him. When a white settler took an Indian wife, he acquired the support of her whole tribe.<sup>30</sup> The anthropologist John R. Swanton analyzed the cases of thirty captive whites, males and females equally divided. He found an unusually high percentage of social success; three or four men became chiefs and about the same number of women became wives of chiefs.<sup>31</sup>

Indian women were attractive to the North American settlers from the beginning. Within a few years after Virginia was settled in the early Seventeenth Century, more than forty male colonists had married Indians. "Indianizing," or "adopting

<sup>27</sup>Thomas S. Woodward, *Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians* (Montgomery, Ala., 1859), 88.

<sup>28</sup>Henry R. Schoolcraft, ed., *Historical and Statistical Information, Respecting the History, Conditions and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1851-57), V, 263.

<sup>29</sup>John Walton Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks* (Norman, Okla., 1938), 6.

<sup>30</sup>Peter Farb, *Man's Rise to Civilization: The Cultural Ascent of the Indians of North America*, Rev. Second edit. (New York, 1978), 250.

<sup>31</sup>John R. Swanton, "Notes on the Mental Assimilation of the Races," *Journal of Washington Academy of Sciences* (1926), 498.

the ways of the Indians," became such a threat to the dissolution of the early settlements that the Colony of Virginia instituted severe penalties against going to live with the Indians,<sup>32</sup> and Cotton Mather preached against "Indianizing." The Creek Indian agent, Benjamin Hawkins, said of the Indian wives that "if the concurrent testimony of the white husbands can be relied upon, the women have much the temper of the mule, except when they are amorous, and then they exhibit all the amiable and generous qualities of the cat."<sup>33</sup> Michel Guillaume Jean de Crevecoeur, in his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), wrote: "There must be in the Indian's social bond something singularly captivating, and far superior to be boasted of among us; for thousands of Europeans are Indians, and we have no examples of even one of these Aborigines having from choice become Europeans."<sup>34</sup> As Peter Farb summarizes it, "Whites who had lived for a time with Indians almost never wanted to leave. But virtually none of the 'civilized' Indians who had been given the opportunity to sample White society chose to become a part of it."<sup>35</sup> David Moniac is a good example of such an Indian who sampled white society — had indeed achieved, in his commission from West Point, one of the highest accolades the white society offered — and then turned his back upon it.

When the Florida War began in 1836, however, Moniac returned to military service in August as a Captain in the Mounted Creek Volunteers. There were 750 Creek Indians in the regiment, including two chiefs, Jim Boy and Paddy Carr, all mustered and paid as militia in the service of the United States. These Indians wore white turbans to distinguish them in battle from the enemy, and the Seminoles hated this white symbol of the Creeks' defection to their enemy. Captain John Lane, of the Second Regiment of the United States Dragoons, was mustered as the commanding officer and promoted to the rank of colonel. Moniac was the only officer designated as Indian among the thirteen officers in the regiment.

The Mounted Creek Volunteers reached Fort Brooke, on

<sup>32</sup>Farb, *Man's Rise to Civilization*, 249.

<sup>33</sup>Hawkins, *A Sketch of the Creek Country*, III, 8.

<sup>34</sup>Dutton edition, 1957, 209.

<sup>35</sup>Farb, *Man's Rise to Civilization*, 249.

Tampa Bay, on October 5, 1836, and proceeded immediately into the interior, reconnoitering widely and engaging in spirited skirmishes with the enemy. Joining forces with General Richard Keith Call, the Creek Volunteers moved out from Fort Drane on November 10 and crossed the Withlacoochee River, thirty miles distant, on the thirteenth.<sup>36</sup> On November 15, David Moniac was promoted to the rank of Major.<sup>37</sup> Although the records are not specific, the promotion must have come as a reward for action in an engagement on the previous day, when a Seminole encampment was attacked with strong resistance. Eleven of the United States troops were killed or wounded in the forty-minute encounter before the Seminoles gave ground and retreated.<sup>38</sup>

On November 20, a detachment of regulars joined with General Call's troops, and at dawn the next day the entire force moved on Wahoo Swamp, where the enemy was massed in large numbers, well prepared for an attack. As Lt. Col. Pierce, the commanding officer of the detachment of regulars described the scene: "After marching about five miles, and within four hundred yards of the Wahoo Swamp, the enemy appeared in force at the edge of the hammock which skirts the swamp, and by their war-whoops and other indications showed themselves in readiness to give battle." The attacking troops made a rapid charge immediately upon reaching the hammock. Firsthand observers reported that the engagement was characterized by a general whooping, yelling, and discharge of rifles, with the Seminoles firing and retreating tree by tree. The white-turbaned Creeks, in their ancient manner, yelled as they moved toward the Seminoles. Past the hammock, a typical wooded, slightly rounded Florida knoll, the attacking troops found themselves in dense scrub, wading through mud and water as deep as four feet. They soon reached the main stream of the Withlacoochee and found the Seminoles now ensconced in force along the opposite bank, about ten yards distant. They were well concealed by logs and stumps, and several withering volleys had little effect on them. From their superior position, they were able to open a galling fire on the soldiers and the Creeks.

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<sup>36</sup>John T. Sprague, *The Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War*, Facsimile of the 1848 edit. (Gainesville, Fla., 1964), 162.

<sup>37</sup>Collum, *Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy*, 113.

<sup>38</sup>Sprague, *The Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War*, 162.



In order to determine whether or not the Withlacoochee was passable, Major Moniac was ordered to sound the depth of the water. As he moved forward to measure it, he was cut down by a deafening blast of enemy fire.<sup>39</sup> One account states that his body was pierced by 67 bullets.<sup>40</sup> It is ironic that Osceola, the chief who commanded the Seminole attack that killed Moniac, was a cousin of the slain major's wife, Mary Powell Moniac.

Thus the scion of one of the most celebrated of Indian families was cut down in his prime. His father, the "venerable old Indian" to whom Dr. Motte had been introduced on the march south, was Sam Moniac (also called Manac). He had acted as an interpreter for Alexander McGillivray, the famous Creek leader, on a visit to George Washington at New York in 1790 at which an important treaty was signed. Thomas S. Woodward, whose *Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians* includes many references to his friend, Sam Moniac, says he "was always looked upon as being one of the most intelligent half-breeds in the Nation." He added, "I have often seen a medal that General Washington gave Moniac. He always kept it on his person, and it is with him in his grave at Pass Christian."<sup>41</sup>

David Moniac was a nephew of William Weatherford, the leader of the attack on Fort Mims and the staunch foe of Andrew Jackson in the Creek War of 1813-14. His great uncle was General Alexander McGillivray. Another uncle, David Tate (for whom Major Moniac was named), had been taken north as a boy by General McGillivray and placed in a school — said to have been under the supervision of General Washington — where he studied for five years. After the death of McGillivray in 1793, Tate was sent to Scotland to complete his education before returning to the Creek nation to take possession of the property which was left to him by the General.<sup>42</sup>

Major David Moniac's life as a soldier was brief and vio-

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<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>40</sup>Brannon, "David Moniac," 41.

<sup>41</sup>Woodward, *Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians*, 94.

<sup>42</sup>J. D. Dreisback, "Weatherford — 'The Red Eagle,' " *Alabama Historical Reporter*, II (February, 1884), 7.

lent, but Major General Thomas Sidney Jesup, commander of the Georgia and Alabama troops in the Florida War, said of him that he "was as brave and gallant a man as ever drew sword or faced an enemy."<sup>43</sup> Entering West Point when he and the Academy, which had opened on July 4, 1802, were approximately the same age, David Moniac, the first minority graduate of that institution, began, at fifteen years and eight months of age, a truly remarkable odyssey between two American cultures, an odyssey tersely memorialized in the four words beneath his name in the Cadet Register: "Was a Creek Indian."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, II (April, 1884), 2.

<sup>44</sup>Cullum, *Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy*, 112.

## THE PRELUDE TO POPULISM IN ALABAMA

by

Karl Rodabaugh

The storm of political protest that swept across Alabama in the 1890s and temporarily ripped apart the Democratic party originated in large part from economic and political conditions of the previous two decades. By the 1890s, most Alabamians did not easily join movements which challenged the Democrats, so unusual circumstances had to arise to prompt the widespread political revolt that took place in the turbulent nineties. Before the Democratic party could be torn asunder, profound dissatisfaction with the existing order of things had to develop and serious political polarization had to occur. This required a chain of events: First, the sources of discontent needed to be felt, recognized, and brought together as elements in a relatively simple explanation of the existing order which could form a basis for political protest; then a framework of political organization had to be developed, appealing through easily recognized symbols to any groups sharing a sense of disadvantage and resting on a platform consisting of programs designed to alleviate the distress; finally, the Democratic party had to appear either as a barrier to the development of relief programs or as an original cause of the distress — or both. All these contingencies actually occurred as the prelude to Alabama's political revolt of the 1890s.

The effects of weaknesses in Alabama's agricultural economy helped produce discontent. The Civil War disrupted Alabama agriculture and the postwar economy lacked the resources needed to solve the state's agricultural problems.<sup>1</sup> One disgruntled farmer later remembered the "deplorable condition [of Alabama agriculture] at the close of the war, our

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<sup>1</sup>A helpful survey of the problems of postwar adjustment is Theodore Saloutos, "Southern Agriculture and the Problems of Adjustment, 1865-1877," *Agricultural History* XXX (April, 1956), 58-76. For another view of postwar southern agriculture in general, see Stephen J. DeCanio, *Agriculture in the Postbellum South: The Economics of Production and Supply* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1974). See also, Grady McWhiney, "The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Alabama Agriculture," *Alabama Review*, XXXI (January, 1978), 3-32.

property destroyed, farms laid waste, our larder lean and bare."<sup>2</sup> Another dissatisfied farmer, who joined the Southern Farmers' Alliance in the 1880s, expressed his sentiments in doggerel:

I fout four years with Bill Forney,  
And considerin, we done powerful well;  
But we all come home busted —  
Niggers, mules, all gone to hell.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, many farmers who had turned to soldiering lay beneath the sod of distant battlefields, while many others returned home with maimed bodies to once-productive farms which sometimes lay in ruins or more often needed extensive care and expensive repairs. Yet Alabama's banking and credit facilities could not satisfy the needs of the economy, labor could be labeled at best only an unstable factor, and transportation networks no longer existed in many areas to link together the state's markets.<sup>4</sup> Despite the hardships they faced, most farmers who returned to their lands after the war took up about where they had left off; as their chief money crop, they planted cotton — the staple that held their faith and about which they had a considerable degree of knowledge. However, cotton farming after the war proved increasingly unprofitable, thereby compounding the farmers' woes.<sup>5</sup> In

<sup>2</sup>Athens *Alliance Banner*, April 19, 1888.

<sup>3</sup>Athens *Alabama Farmer*, December 19, 1888.

<sup>4</sup>Livingston *Journal*, November 22, 1889; Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, November 12, 1885; Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York, 1905), 253-255, 279-280. On the freedmen and agricultural labor in postwar Alabama, see John B. Meyers, "Reaction and Adjustment: The Struggle of Alabama Freedom in Post-Bellum Alabama, 1865-1867," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XXXII (Spring and Summer, 1970), 5-22; "The Freedmen and the Labor Supply: The Economic Adjustments in Post-Bellum Alabama, 1865-1867," *Ibid.*, XXXII Fall and Winter, 1970), 157-166; "Black Human Capital: The Freedmen and the Reconstruction of Labor in Alabama, 1860-1880" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1974); Sylvia H. Krebs, "Will the Freedmen Work? White Alabamians Adjust to Free Black Labor," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XXXVI (Summer, 1974), 151-163; Peter Kolchin, *First Freedom: The Responses of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Westport, Conn., 1972). See also, James L. Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 1977), chapters 3, 4, and 5.

<sup>5</sup>Guntersville *Democrat*, September 3, 1881. The best study of postwar cotton production is Harold D. Woodman, *King Cotton and His Retainers: Financing and Marketing the Cotton Crop of the South, 1800-1925* (Lexington, 1968), 249-295.

fact, the overall status of Alabama agriculture in the last third of the nineteenth century generally remained so low that many farmers constantly faced the specter of failure. During "the seventies," an Alabama journalist later wrote, "loss was almost a rule and dissatisfaction became universal."<sup>6</sup> Declining cotton prices, the lien system, inefficient marketing arrangements, poor credit resources, and wasteful farming methods headed a long list of serious problems which confronted Alabama's cotton farmers. "That agriculture is tottering upon its foundation can be questioned by none. Its depressed condition is heralded throughout the land," said George Motz, a leader in the efforts to improve farming in the state, in an address before the Alabama State Agricultural Society.<sup>7</sup> When the farmers considered the reasons for their problems, some of them reached conclusions that turned out to be illusory but many others reached valid conclusions based in part on a sensible analysis of their economic condition.

Many Alabama farmers pointed to the credit lien system as both a powerful cause and effect of the state's agricultural distress.<sup>8</sup> "Under the blighting influence of the credit system our people had been forced to the conclusion that farming would not pay," reported the *Tuskegee News*.<sup>9</sup> In the usual lien arrangement, a farmer (most often a tenant farmer) pledged a portion of his next crop to either the landlord providing at least the land or the merchant providing the year's supplies. The system offered a way of extending credit to farmers who lacked collateral (other than the crop itself) and it also proved

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Also useful is Robert L. Brandfon, *Cotton Kingdom of the New South: A History of the Yazoo Mississippi Delta from Reconstruction to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1967).

<sup>6</sup>Clanton *Chilton View*, August 8, 1889, quoting *Birmingham Age-Herald*.

<sup>7</sup>Huntsville *Weekly Mercury*, August 22, 1888.

<sup>8</sup>A useful recent study of the topic is Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, "Debt Peonage in the Cotton South after the Civil War," *Journal of Economic History*, XXXII (September, 1972), 641-669. Also helpful are Joseph Reid, "Sharecropping as an Understandable Market Response: The Post-Bellum South," *Ibid.*, XXXIII (March, 1973), 106-130; "Sharecropping in History and Theory," *Agricultural History*, IXL (April, 1975), 426-440; Margaret Pace Farmer, "Furnishing Merchants and Sharecroppers in Pike County, Alabama," *Alabama Review*, XXIII (April, 1970), 143-151.

<sup>9</sup>*Livingston Journal*, November 22, 1889, quoting *Tuskegee News*. For a defense of the credit lien system, see *Livingston Journal*, November 29, 1889.



to be a factor in the solution of the postwar agricultural labor problem. As the system often worked, landlords maintained accounts with local merchants from whom the landlords' tenants could receive supplies, with the cost of the supplies including interest charges which sometimes soared above 100 percent to be taken out of the tenants' share of the crops.<sup>10</sup> To keep a close watch on crop production and to avoid dealing in perishables, merchants demanded that farmers agree to grow cotton as a condition to be met before entering into a lien agreement. "The merchants," one farmer declared, "will not advance supplies on hay, oats, wheat, corn, potatoes, or any other product of the soil save and except cotton, and not having the cash to follow the system of farming most pleasant to him, [the farmer] must, perforce, accept the only alternative left open to him and plant the staple demanded by the merchant."<sup>11</sup> This forced the farmers to grow much more cotton than was called for by the world market conditions.

While cotton production was being over-emphasized in Alabama, cotton from new sources flooded the world market and the price of the staple began a steady decline.<sup>12</sup> From a peak of 17.9¢ per pound in 1871 the price dropped to 8.59¢ by 1878, leveled off around 8¢ from 1878 until 1890, and then pitched downward until it hit 5.7¢ in 1898, when the cost of production was 7¢ per pound.<sup>13</sup> As the price of the staple fell, cotton farmers — large numbers of whom faced unpaid liens — sought a way of increasing their returns, so they grew more cotton. This caused acreage and production to increase rapidly from 1865 to 1900, even though the return to the farmer often was too small for him to pay off his lien. "Here it is demonstrated year in and year out that raising cotton don't pay," grumbled Samuel Lawrence, a dissatisfied cotton farmer who lived near

<sup>10</sup>See *Guntersville Democrat*, December 31, 1885; *Livingston Journal*, January 31, 1889.

<sup>11</sup>*Livingston Journal*, November 8, 1889, quoting *Huntsville Weekly Mercury*.

<sup>12</sup>*Eleventh Census*, 1890, I, Agriculture, 44-45, 276; *Eighth Census*, 1860, Agriculture, 2; *Guntersville Democrat*, September 3, 1881. On the topic of cotton overproduction, see also Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, "The 'Lock-In' Mechanism and Overproduction of Cotton in the Postbellum South," *Agricultural History*, IXL (April, 1975), 405-425; Stephen J. DeCanio, "Cotton 'Overproduction' in Late Nineteenth-Century Southern Agriculture," *Journal of Economic History*, XXXIII (September, 1973), 608-633.

<sup>13</sup>Sheldon Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism in Alabama* (Princeton, 1969), 6.

Greensboro.<sup>14</sup> As a result, the Alabama cotton farmer often found himself trapped by the lien in a cycle of increasing production and declining prices.<sup>15</sup>

Sometimes a farmer's energy and spirit were consumed while trying to pay off his lien, thereby making poignant the heavy human costs of the "ruinous" and "suicidal" lien system. By the late 1880s, "the average Alabama farmer" was described as a "discouraged [man] who now for twenty years has been pulling the 'bell cord over a mortgaged mule!'"<sup>16</sup> Because tenant farmers were chained to the lien debt, they lacked control over their own affairs and often had little initiative to improve their situation. Moreover, a tenant could not readily secure a better lien from another merchant because the tenant had no collateral for a lien other than his future cotton crop—which already had a lien on it. In addition, legal penalties existed for anyone who broke a lien agreement. Large numbers of tenant farmers therefore had no choice but to make agreement after agreement, year in and year out, with merchants who forced them to grow cotton, even marketed their crops, and often limited their production of foodstuffs in order to reduce competition with store supplies. As a result of these circumstances, thousands of tenant families existed on very limited diets with practically no money left over for "extras" such as newspapers and school supplies. A lifetime of hard work by the average Alabama tenant farmer gained him nothing more than "a log cabin with a mud and stick chimney, brogan shoes, and [a] mean living for his wife and children."<sup>17</sup> Among the members of such families, disease easily took its toll and the average level of education remained extremely low, even for the postwar South. Tenancy also proved to be a constant source of fear and insecurity for non-tenant farmers.

In addition to the tenants and the large landholders, Alabama contained two other main categories of farmers: the independent white small farmers who often owned a little land plus the more prosperous white small farmers, or "yeomen." Outside the black belt region of Alabama, a common type was the self-sufficient or independent white farmer — sometimes

<sup>14</sup>Clanton *Chilton View*, January 20, 1887.

<sup>15</sup>See Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, September 18, 1884.

<sup>16</sup>Athens *Alliance Banner*, January 20, 1888.



called the "poor white" — who often owned or simply squatted upon a small parcel of land. This group typically worked the poorest lands in the counties with relatively few black residents, producing mostly cotton and corn. On the surface, the independent "poor white" farmer's existence at a harsh level of self-sufficiency did not appear much different from that of the tenant (and the two types have been lumped together under the heading "poor whites"). But thus far the independent "poor white" farmer had managed somehow to escape the chains of the lien system — an accomplishment worth more than brief notice. A step above the independent "poor whites" were the more prosperous white landholding small farmers — labeled the "yeomen farmers." They generally lived in the same areas and produced the same crops as the independent "poor whites," but their farms, while modest in comparison with those of the large landholders, generally were larger and better than those of the "poor whites." As a result, the yeomanry's farms usually yielded a noticeable surplus for them to market. Amidst the agricultural crisis in Alabama in the late nineteenth century, however, both the independent "poor whites" and their more prosperous neighbors felt the stark horror of tenancy and the pains of the credit system gnawing at their vitals. Because the more prosperous "yeomen farmers" fared better than the independent "poor whites" and had more to lose, perhaps the yeomanry felt the threat of tenancy most keenly. Many members of this group feared that economic conditions in Alabama had given rise to "a system of landlords and tenantry that will make slaves of the farming class."<sup>18</sup> Probably because the "yeomen farmers" actively engaged in agricultural markets and knew more about the problems caused by declining prices, this group more quickly sought reasons for the "tottering" condition of Alabama agriculture and remedies for their distress.

Looking about themselves, Alabama's disgruntled farmers found many causes for their plight: Merchants and middlemen,

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<sup>17</sup>Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, July 28, 1887, quoting Talladega *Our Mountain Home*.

<sup>18</sup>See Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, September 18, 1884; Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism*, 26; James Agee and Walker Evans, *Three Tenant Families: Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Boston, 1941), 119; R. Means Davis, "The Matter with the Small Farmer," *Forum*, XIV (November, 1892), 381; Theodore Saloutos, *Farmer Movements in the South, 1865-1933* (Berkeley, 1960), 1, 3-5. The quotation is from Athens *Alliance Banner*, April 26, 1888.

local courthouse rings and the Democratic party, cities and a materialistic, non-rural lifestyle, banks, the transportation system, trusts, speculators, manufacturers, the tariff, and the various levels of government all appeared to be working against the honest yeomanry who till the soil."<sup>19</sup> However, many contemporaries pointed to the farmers themselves as a large part of the problem, and not without considerable justification.<sup>20</sup> The Alabama farmer's nature certainly contributed to the agricultural distress because the average farmer had little knowledge of the marketing system, improved machinery, or even better agricultural methods. National economic developments and growing competition from large farms in the West called for improved financial and business management; farming in America was becoming a big business linked up with an increasingly interdependent national economy and this required that even Alabama's small farmers change a great deal.<sup>21</sup> Yet many of the state's farmers felt that large numbers of their colleagues hurt not only the others but also the agricultural economy because they lacked the ability to farm in a business-like manner, failed to modernize their methods, and refused to diversify their crops. "You might as well undertake to demonstrate that the moon is made of green cheese," complained Hector D. Lane, editor of the Huntsville *Weekly Mercury* and later Alabama's Commissioner of Agriculture, "as to convince the average Alabama farmer that his salvation depends on something else than the planting and raising of cotton."<sup>22</sup> Other writers advocated agricultural self-sufficiency through diversification, called for "a radical change in the methods" of Alabama's farmers, and predicted economic betterment "if [only] our brother farmers could see farther ahead and sow more wheat at home and quit those northern flour markets [and] quit having our smoke houses and corn cribs at the north."<sup>23</sup> One editor declared: "The time is come when southern farmers must diversify their corps. Cotton has kept them down long enough,

<sup>19</sup>Ashville *Southern Alliance*, September 14, 1899; Livingston *Journal*, June 2, February 17, 1887, February 9, December 13, 1888; Huntsville *Weekly Mercury*, April 17, December 25, 1889; Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, March 31, 1887; Athens *Alliance Banner*, April 12, 26, May 31, January 20, February 23, 16, March 8, 1888.

<sup>20</sup>Mobile *Register*, May 4, 1890, citing Florence *Herald*.

<sup>21</sup>On the transformation of farming into big business, see Jimmy M. Skaggs, *An Interpretive History of the American Economy* (Columbus, Ohio, 1975), 55.

<sup>22</sup>Huntsville *Weekly Mercury*, March 6 1889.

<sup>23</sup>Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, May 19, 1887, June 11, 1885.

and they must now down cotton."<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the most common explanation of the farmers' failure to follow what seemed to many editors to be excellent advice centered on the individualism and "conservatism of the country [that have] heretofore existed in the agricultural classes."<sup>25</sup> There is no doubt that many farmers — who certainly were conservative and suspicious of innovation — remained tied to old methods of cotton production, responded slowly to notions of interest group organization at a time when other interests were making themselves heard through effective organization, and even refused to accept overproduction of cotton as a cause of their predicament. But while the character of many farmers and their failure to react properly to changes in farming certainly contributed to the deterioration of agriculture, many other factors such as the nation's monetary policy and high railroad rates also worked against them in a manner which induced most farmers to look for the enemy outside their ranks.

National economic policies and the effects on agriculture of a changing national economy worked generally to the disadvantage of southern farmers. After the Civil War, the federal government carried out many financial policies which benefited creditors and large financial interests.<sup>26</sup> For example, silver was demonetized in 1873, thereby reducing the amount of money in circulation, and the Resumption Act of 1875 put greenbacks at parity with gold, causing the value of the dollar to rise while farm prices fell.<sup>27</sup> In addition, efforts

<sup>24</sup>Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, March 17, 1887.

<sup>25</sup>Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, March 18, 1886. See also, Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, February 10, 1887.

<sup>26</sup>Professor Charles A. Beard and his disciples have interpreted late nineteenth century political history in a dualistic manner as a struggle between the farmer and the capitalist over economic policies, but Professor Irwin Unger rejects both their dualism and their economic determinism in favor of a more complex explanation. See Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization* (new revised and enlarged edition, New York, 1944); Irwin Unger, *The Greenback Era: A Social and Political History of American Finance, 1865-1879* (Princeton, 1964). For an interpretation that rejects Beard's implication that "monolithic" capitalist forces dominated economic policymaking but accepts "an economic determinism even more complete," see Robert Sharkey, *Money, Class, and Party: An Economic Study of Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baltimore, 1959).

<sup>27</sup>A complete discussion of the Resumption Act of 1875 as well as information on the demonetization of silver can be found in Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 249-285, 374-407, 329.

by the federal government to retire the national debt by redeeming bonds made the bonds rise in value, which caused national banks to sell large quantities of the bonds they held; and because these banks issued maximum dollar amounts of national bank notes based on the par value of the bonds they held, the federal government's retirement of its bonds resulted in the withdrawal from circulation of large amounts of national bank notes, thereby further reducing the circulating medium just when an inflationary influence was needed. A deflationary cycle resulted, producing a bad reaction among state banks and adversely affecting agricultural prices. State banks, which could not serve local market areas as well as at one time due to the limiting effect of the ten percent federal tax on state bank notes, could not lend up to their former capacity because of rising dollar values and eastern obligations. As the value of the gold dollar rose gradually until in 1890 it commanded over two-and-one-half times its 1865 level of purchasing power, the appreciation of the dollar meant that farmers not only received lower prices for a relative amount of farm produce, but also had to produce more to pay their outstanding debts. As Alabama farmers felt the first pains of lower prices, they cried for credit to keep going and to increase production; but credit was more and more difficult to obtain, in part because the establishment of banking facilities in the state's agricultural regions lagged far below the requirements. Moreover, most investment capital which came into the South went to business and industry, causing agricultural interest rates to increase even further. By the 1880s, the *Montgomery Advertiser* and other papers commented on the lack of currency in the state's farming regions while Alabama's hard-pressed farmers held local mass meetings where they passed resolutions against "the present rate of interest which is usury." Although the need for a greater supply of money in circulation clearly existed in Alabama, the national trend went in the opposite direction: whereas in 1873 there had been \$339,000,000 in national bank notes in circulation, by 1891 the supply had fallen to \$168,000,000.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup>John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party* (Minneapolis, 1931), 87-95; William Warren Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion: Agrarianism in Alabama, 1865-1896* (Baton Rouge, 1970), 14; *Livingston Journal*, January 12, 1888; *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, May 10, 1888; *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, November 12, 1885; *Athens Alliance Banner*, April 26, 1888; C.



Fluctuating currency supplies and speculation in agricultural futures added to the farmers' problems. Due to speculation, glutted markets, and changes in the currency supply, the dollar's value rose at marketing time and agricultural prices dropped; then after the farmers sold their produce, the dollar's value fell and prices increased.<sup>29</sup> When Alabama farmers reflected on the commissions of middlemen, the relatively high prices exacted by corporations for farm supplies and machinery, the profits of speculators, and the extortionate credit rates, they found it easy to conclude that the mysterious cycle of prices and the currency supply was a conspiracy.<sup>30</sup> When the farmers came together and talked about their common plight, one farmer observed, "we began to realize the fact that merchants, railroads, manufacturers, syndicates and every other profession was [*sic*] organized against us and that we were helpless and without protection."<sup>31</sup> At all junctures, the mechanisms of the economy seemed to operate against them, leading farmers throughout the South to conclude that the creditor class "had conspired to enact and perpetuate the 'Crime of '73,' the Resumption Act of 1875, and other measures that restricted the nation's supply of money."<sup>32</sup>

The operation of Alabama's railroads also generated the seeds of discord. With the help of state, county, and city governments, Alabama's railroads were rebuilt and expanded after the Civil War. But the process occurred too quickly and too extensively, and the effects of this situation as well as fraud, over-extension of credit, and watered stock caused the state's railroads to fail in the 1873 panic. By the mid-seventies, all Alabama railroads were insolvent. Within a

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Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951), 186. See also, William E. Laird and James R. Rinehart, "Deflation, Agriculture, and Southern Development," *Agricultural History*, XLII (April, 1968), 115-124.

<sup>29</sup>Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*, 89, 91.

<sup>30</sup>See *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, April 12, 1888; *Athens Alliance Banner*, January 20, 1888; W. Scott Morgan, *History of the Wheel and Alliance, and the Impending Revolution* (Ft. Scott, Kans., 1889), 511-514.

<sup>31</sup>*Athens Alliance Banner*, May 31, 1888.

<sup>32</sup>Fred A. Shannon, *The Farmers' Last Frontier: Agriculture, 1860-1897* (New York, 1945), 314-315. Professor Unger makes it clear that the demonetization of silver was not a conspiracy, but he also points out that the farmers definitely blamed their problems on "scapegoats" such as the bankers. See *The Greenback Era*. 390-391, 209.

few years, however, the Louisville and Nashville Railroad (L & N) reorganized many lines and secured control of enough of the state's railway network to permit it to set transportation rates in Alabama without serious competition from other lines. The L & N computed rates on the basis of various competitive points along its lines. These "basing points" — including such places as Selma, Montgomery, and Mobile — were located on waterways or were served by other railroads in addition to the L & N, so they were among the few places enjoying beneficial rates due to the competition. On the other hand, non-competitive points received rates determined by computing the sum of the rate for a nearby competitive point plus the rate from there to the non-competitive point. This meant that the rate for a bale of cotton from Montgomery to Mobile (both of which were competitive points) fluctuated between 75¢ and \$1.25, while the rate from Greenville (a non-competitive point about one-fourth of the way between Montgomery and Mobile) to Mobile was \$2.30 a bale. Throughout the state, railroads charged higher rates per mile for shorter hauls than for longer hauls. Moreover, as agricultural traffic decreased in proportion to the tonnage traffic of Alabama's growing industries, areas that were predominantly agricultural in their economies offered less impetus to competition among railroads so they suffered higher rates than other areas of the state. Despite the fact that Alabama farmers direly needed a cheap means of distributing their crops, the state's railroads failed to provide an equitable system of transportation geared toward serving the needs of the farmers. To the contrary, the railroads charged just what the traffic could bear.<sup>33</sup>

When the inequitable rate structure fostered demands for reform, railroads became a bigger and bigger factor in Alabama politics. The state legislature established the Alabama Railroad Commission in 1881, but with only weak rate-setting powers and without any real means of balancing the rate struc-

<sup>33</sup>A. B. Moore, "Railroad Building in Alabama During the Reconstruction Period," *Journal of Southern History*, I (November, 1935), 421-441; William E. Martin, *Internal Improvements in Alabama* (Baltimore, 1902); *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, March 18, 1886; *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, March 31, 1887; James F. Doster, *Railroad in Alabama Politics* (University, Ala.: 1951), 4-5, 8, 6n, 62-63, 69-70, 67, 107-111; Trade Centers and Railroad Rates in Alabama, 1873-1885: The Cases of Greenville, Montgomery, and Opelika," *Journal of Southern History*, XVIII (1952), 177-180, 170-172, 174.



ture. In fact, the commission protected the favorable position of competitive trade centers and lacked the powers to bring about a redress of grievances for non-competitive points.<sup>34</sup> Efforts in the mid-eighties to increase the commission's regulatory powers brought the L & N Railroad actively into Alabama politics. By using extensive lobbying and widespread propaganda and by relying on the willingness of those agricultural areas which needed railroad transportation to please the L & N, the railroad shaped a political force — oiled by the free pass and other advantages — which crumbled the movement to strengthen the commission.<sup>35</sup>

Although the L & N did not then gain absolute control of Alabama politics, during the next decade it experienced "little trouble with the Alabama legislature, where the few unfriendly proposals were checked by the railroad lobby with quiet efficiency."<sup>36</sup> Despite continued complaints from newspaper editors and others about the inequitable rate structure, the L & N's propaganda and political power produced a situation where even those editors who voiced their complaints the loudest added quickly that "no single agency has contributed as much to the upbuilding of Alabama as this railroad."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, many editors sought to encourage the railroads by calling for the legislature to abolish the railroad commission.<sup>38</sup> The commission, however, was even less of a problem for the railroads than the legislature. The commissioners spent their time going throughout the state in a "patriarchal manner" seeking solutions to conflicts arising from minor public complaints over station accommodations and the like; they "urged a conciliatory spirit between the aggrieved party and the railroad" and they made every effort not to burden the state's lines.<sup>39</sup> Their instincts were "those of the politician desirous of remaining in office."<sup>40</sup>

<sup>34</sup>Allen J. Going, "The Establishment of the Alabama Railroad Commission," *Journal of Southern History*, XII (1946), 375-377; *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, March 18, 1886; Doster, "Trade Centers and Railroad Rates," 184-185.

<sup>35</sup>James F. Doster, "Railroad Domination in Alabama, 1885-1905," *Alabama Review*, VIII (July, 1954), 186, 193; *Railroads in Alabama Politics*, 20-25.

<sup>36</sup>Doster, "Railroad Domination in Alabama," 188.

<sup>37</sup>See, for example, *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, March 18, 1886, April 7, 1887.

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, February 10, 1887.

<sup>39</sup>*Calera Shelby Sentinel*, November 11, September 16, 1886.

<sup>40</sup>Doster, *Railroads in Alabama Politics*, 32.

Burdened by high railroad rates and low farm prices and convinced that the economy was being manipulated to their disadvantage, Alabama farmers responded in large numbers when the Grange (officially the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry) entered the state. Eight subordinate granges, organized by a deputy from Mississippi, appeared in several West Alabama counties in 1872. Evander McIver Law, a gentleman farmer and ex-Confederate major general, soon took the lead in establishing the Alabama State Grange. Like General Law, most Alabama grange leaders espoused conservative views on politics and economics, came from the upper class, enjoyed the benefits of education, and held large landholdings and other financial assets — they were “men of wealth and prosperity.”<sup>41</sup> However, the state’s small farmers — apparently the more successful ones — made up the bulk of the Grange’s following. Under General Law’s guidance, 129 delegates met in Montgomery, November 27, 1873 and completed the organization of the Alabama State Grange. By 1875, 680 local granges had been established across the state, with about 17,000 members.<sup>42</sup>

Established to “reform and elevate . . . agriculture, by making it independent and profitable, and its followers intelligent and prosperous,” the new farmers’ order emphasized organization above all else.<sup>43</sup> Included within its goals, however, was the desire to help the embattled farmers in “a conflict of cultures” — between “Jeffersonian agrarianism and a new industrial urbanism” — which the nation’s farmers seemed to be losing.<sup>44</sup> According to the Grange, it gave the farmers the opportunity to come together in grange halls where they could discuss farming and educate themselves in the changing requirements of their occupation. Grange leaders assumed that as the farmers learned more about their plight, they would

<sup>41</sup>William Warren Rogers, “The Alabama State Grange,” *Alabama Review*, VIII (April, 1955), 105.

<sup>42</sup>Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 66-67; D. Sven Nordin, *Rich Harvest: A History of the Grange, 1867-1900* (Jackson, 1974), 29. The Alabama State Grange lagged behind those of other South Central states in membership, perhaps because the national Grange appealed to the strong anti-railroad bias of most southern farmers while most Alabama grangers had mixed feelings about railroads. See Going, “Alabama Railroad Commission,” 367-368.

<sup>43</sup>*Proceedings of the Second Annual Session of the Alabama State Grange, 1874*, 11.

<sup>44</sup>Nordin, *Rich Harvest*, 3.

become convinced of the great need for concerted action among the tillers of the soil. At first this meant that organization was desired essentially to stimulate further organization, but once group action became easy to the farmers they would engage in cooperative buying and selling in order to achieve economic relief. Perhaps as its most important contribution the Grange made organized action a mania among many of its members, although it also produced social and educational benefits.<sup>45</sup> A recent study of the granger movement "gives credence to the statements made repeatedly by grange leaders that their order was primarily a social and educational fraternity for farmers and their families rather than a medium for political and economic activities."<sup>46</sup> The new farmers' order established schools, papers, and agricultural journals — all of which emphasized scientific methods of farming; it held social functions where isolated farmers and their wives came into closer contact with their world; and it hosted frequent lectures where speakers exhorted those in attendance to join the movement for greater crop diversification, increased grain and stock production, and soil improvements.<sup>47</sup> In addition, said one neutral observer, "the state agricultural department . . . owes its existence" to the Grange.<sup>48</sup> Both nationally and in Alabama, the leaders of the order promoted an organized effort to decrease cotton production.<sup>49</sup> This suggestion had little effect in Alabama, however, because the bulk of the grangers in the state seem to have felt that the underlying goal of the order was to devise a method of increasing the staple's price, not decreasing its production. Whatever faith the majority of Alabama grangers had in the idea of organization apparently stemmed from their hope that group action would improve existing conditions — chiefly the price of cotton — and not from a desire to bring about fundamental changes in agriculture by deemphasizing cotton production.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup>Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 68-69.

<sup>46</sup>Nordin, *Rich Harvest*, viii.

<sup>47</sup>See Montgomery *Southern Plantation*, I (1875), II (1876), III (1877), *passim*; Robert Partin, "Black's Bend Grange, 1873-77: A Case Study of a Subordinate Grange of the Deep South," *Agricultural History*, XXXI (July, 1957), 55.

<sup>48</sup>Clanton *Chilton View*, August 8, 1889, quoting *Birmingham Age-Herald*.

<sup>49</sup>Saloutos, *Farmer Movement*, 39; Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 70.

<sup>50</sup>For a view of the Granger movement as "essentially reactionary, trying to segregate the farmer from society, raising his standard of living without contamination from alleged city vices and industrial development," see H. Wayne Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896* (Syracuse, 1969), 367.

Many grangers might not have recognized progressive proposals for changing or improving agriculture as the fundamental goals of their order, but the Grange did succeed in focusing the farmers' attention on agricultural problems, promoting some changes in farming methods, and sponsoring several attempts at organized action.<sup>51</sup> In 1874 the Tuscaloosa County Grange recommended shifting from cotton production to corn in order to avoid debt, suggested that a way be found for getting better prices for supplies from the merchants, and condemned the lien system as a large factor in causing farm distress.<sup>52</sup> The Alabama State Grange openly opposed the lien system and established cooperative business ventures that were designed to end the leechings of middlemen, commission agents, and merchants. Such action brought the grangers into conflict with the merchants. Planters who joined the Grange had their mortgages foreclosed and grange cooperatives faced intense competition from established businesses. Many local granges organized boycotts to force the merchants to lower their prices, but these efforts were doomed to failure by the farmers' dependence on the merchants for supplies. By 1875, virtually all cooperative endeavors had succumbed to overwhelming opposition, signaling the failure of the goal of economic relief through organization and precipitating the rapid decline of the granger movement in the South.<sup>53</sup> In addition, it soon became clear that the order had not provided a remedy for the debt situation: "despite all that the Grange could do," one Alabama historian has concluded, "the sharecropping and renting systems became more firmly entrenched . . . , while 'King Cotton' retained his sovereignty."<sup>54</sup> Perhaps the Grange's organized actions served largely to help illuminate the stranglehold of the lien and cotton cycle in Alabama agriculture.

The Alabama State Grange exhibited mixed tendencies in its actions and statements pertaining to the state's railroads. Wanting regulation after the example of the West and Midwest

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<sup>51</sup>See *Proceedings of the Second Annual Session of the Alabama State Grange, 1874*, 9-10.

<sup>52</sup>Houston Cole, "History of Populism in Tuscaloosa County" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Alabama, 1927), 40-41.

<sup>53</sup>*Proceedings of the Second Annual Session of the Alabama State Grange, 1874*, 10-11; Rogers, "The Alabama State Grange," 111-114, 116-117; Nordin, *Rich Harvest*, vii.

<sup>54</sup>Rogers, "The Alabama State Grange," 110.



but cautious lest they might discourage railway expansion, the grangers generally avoided serious criticism of Alabama lines. During the peak of the granger movement, however, the impact of railroads on society received notice and some action resulted: the 1875 Alabama constitution followed the Grange-influenced Illinois constitution in declaring railroads to be common carriers; it also made it a legislative duty to enact laws regulating freight and passenger rates and prohibiting rate discrimination; in addition, the 1875 constitution prohibited the consolidation of parallel or competing lines and made it possible for the legislature to enact laws against free passes.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, "the railroad commission," a Birmingham *Age-Herald* correspondent later claimed, "owes its existence absolutely to the grange movement."<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the growth of the L & N's political influence in the 1880s prevented the realization of any far-reaching benefits from railroad legislation adopted during the granger era.

The Grange did not seek gains for agriculture through direct organized political action, but it still exerted a considerable influence on Alabama politics. Reflecting the power and influence of the Grange's leaders, most of whom had political connections and participated in politics, the legislature enacted many laws such as the one that tightened the planters' control over their tenants and another that created new tax measures benefiting large landholders by granting them tax exemptions which did not apply to smaller farmers.<sup>57</sup> In fact, "most of the agricultural legislation during this period was directed toward improving the position of the landowner and planter rather than that of the small farmers."<sup>58</sup> However, a few laws promised to affect a larger number of farmers, including legislation prohibiting the destruction of forests, establishing the Alabama Railroad Commission, and providing for the State Department of Agriculture.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup>See *Constitution of Alabama, 1875*.

<sup>56</sup>Clanton *Chilton View*, August 8, 1889, quoting Birmingham *Age-Herald*.

<sup>57</sup>Rogers, "The Alabama State Grange," 107-108; Allen Johnston Going, *Bourbon Democracy in Alabama, 1874-1890* (University, Ala., 1951), 98-99.

<sup>58</sup>Going, *Bourbon Democracy*, 103.

<sup>59</sup>See Rogers, "The Alabama State Grange," 105. "The Grange honestly did try to sever partisanship from its programs," concludes the most recent historian of the order, "and it did denounce almost every dissident move aimed at forwarding either parties or would be office seekers." See Nordin, *Rich Harvest*, 182.

The political record of the Grange reveals a breach between its leaders and its followers and characterizes the order as a conservative institution. Perhaps the main reason this happened was because the Grange "let in moneyed men [including merchants and middlemen] who . . . soon got control."<sup>60</sup> As an agency representing the views of the larger and more prosperous farmers, the order served as a sort of limited or embryonic interest group organization. If the Grange had not been so conservative and had not overlooked the needs of the smaller farmers, it might have done more to pave the way for the later appearance in Alabama of a more completely developed interest group organization with wider appeal — the Southern Farmers' Alliance. As State Master Hiram Hawkins said, however, the Grange was recognized throughout the state as a "great conservative . . . organization."<sup>61</sup> One example of its conservatism was the manner in which it assisted the Democrats in the restoration of white rule in Alabama in the 1870s.

Although it was anything but radical and it never had a cohesive program aimed toward the achievement of set goals, the order did seek to improve the status of Alabama's farmers even if it did so in ways which almost never included any action showing alienation from the traditional forms of Alabama society. This did not stop the Grange from advocating some things — such as the establishment of the railroad commission — which revealed a small but important shift in philosophy toward "an extension of the arm of government into new spheres of activity."<sup>62</sup> Nor did the order's conservatism prevent it from supporting actions which exacerbated "the tension between town and country" that had long existed in America, or from flirting in a small way with new monetary ideas, thereby heralding the later significant shifts in thought by many Democrats from sound money "doctrines" to soft money "theories."<sup>63</sup> In addition, the Grange's secret oaths and ritual probably heightened agrarian cultural unity and otherwise acted as a "binding force" among the farmers by propelling them "into a

<sup>60</sup>Athens *Alliance Banner*, March 1, 1888. See also, *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, December 6, 1888.

<sup>61</sup>Rogers, *The Onc-Gallused Rebellion*, 76.

<sup>62</sup>Nordin, *Rich Harvest*, 149.

<sup>63</sup>Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 202, 292. Unger notes that "rural fears served as fertile ground for the soft money Democracy." *Ibid.*, 196.



euphoric state of excitement and imagination" which overcame the "sterility and colorlessness" of other farm groups.<sup>64</sup> To have been a real challenge to the existing social, economic, and political order, however, the granger movement would have had to attract a much larger and more alienated following in support of a more radical program. Even if the Grange did not do this, it did cause many farmers to recognize the benefits of group action and it opened their eyes to the potential of organized political action.

Alabama politics underwent many important changes in the same general period that the granger movement was preparing many Alabama farmers to promote their interests through organized action and pressure group politics. Before the Civil War a vigorous two-party system existed in Alabama, with Whigs and Democrats opposing each other throughout the state.<sup>65</sup> After the war, however, Radical Republican control of the state gradually forced realignments among the members of the old parties. Democrats and former Whigs came together in the mid-seventies under the banner of white supremacy as the Democratic and Conservative party and "redeemed" the state from Radical rule.<sup>66</sup> The leadership of this new coalition — called the Bourbons — generally consisted of conservative members of Alabama society who were large planters and landowners, merchants, lawyers, bankers, or railroad men. Perhaps the least confusing, if not the best, way to approach an understanding of the word Bourbon is to adopt "the populist habit of using Bourbon as a generic term for the post-

<sup>64</sup>Nordin, *Rich Harvest*, 9-10.

<sup>65</sup>Although the Democrats enjoyed political supremacy in the state before 1860, the Whigs displayed considerable strength and attracted supporters from the various segments of Alabama society, not simply from the silk-stocking elite. See Grady McWhiney, "Were the Whigs a Class Party in Alabama?" *Journal of Southern History*, XXIII (1957), 510-522. For a perceptive analysis of ante-bellum Alabama society, see J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge, 1978).

<sup>66</sup>Goins, *Bourbon Democracy*, 1, 9-19; Thomas B. Alexander, "Persistent Whiggery in Alabama and the Lower South, 1860-1867," *Alabama Review*, XII (1959), 47-52; Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, *The Scalawag in Alabama Politics, 1865-1881* (University, Ala., 1977), 91-104. See also, Edward C. Williamson, "The Alabama Election of 1874," *Alabama Review*, XVII (July, 1964), 210-218. Significant recent assessments of Reconstruction historiography include Richard O. Curry, "The Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1877: A Critical Overview of Recent Trends and Interpretations," *Civil War History*, XX (September, 1974), 215-238; Robert Reid,

Reconstruction establishment."<sup>67</sup> Because the Bourbons brought together within the same structure many of the diverse elements of the old parties, neither the reasons for the union of such "Procrustean Bedfellows" nor the new party's positions on many economic and political issues were at all clear to many contemporaries. However, one Democratic newspaper explained the new coalition's cohesiveness as follows:

The Democratic party . . . is composed of men of all shades of opinion upon what to [party members] are non-essential questions. All of this heterogeneous crowd came together . . . in 1868, not because they agreed upon any two [issues], but because [they] agreed upon the one great essential question, the preservation of State Government here in Alabama in the hands of the white race.<sup>68</sup>

The new political alliance was formed in a period when significant economic changes were affecting the state. A host of entrepreneurs were eagerly developing Alabama's new iron industry and exploiting her mineral resources. Railroad promoters were rapidly increasing the miles of track in the state in order to serve the new sources of traffic created by mushrooming production of iron and coal. Although the 1873 panic temporarily stifled business growth in Alabama, by 1879 the state's industries entered a period of tremendous growth and expansion. Only about \$500,000 was invested in the state's iron mines in 1880, but by 1889 the sum had risen to over \$5,250,000. Moreover, production of iron ore jumped from 171,000 tons to 1,570,000 tons in the same period.<sup>69</sup> It is not

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<sup>67</sup>"Changing Interpretations of the Reconstruction Period in Alabama," *Alabama Review*, XXVII (October, 1974), 362-381. See also, Allen W. Trelease, *Reconstruction: The Great Experiment* (New York, 1971); William R. Brock, *Conflict and Transformation: The United States, 1844-1877* (Middlesex, England, 1973).

<sup>68</sup>George Brown Tindall, *The Persistent Tradition in New South Politics* (Baton Rouge, 1975), chapter 1, quoting from 9. Another valuable discussion of the use of the term Bourbon is Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., "The Southern Bourbons Revisited," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LX (1961), 286-295.

<sup>69</sup>Mobile Register, February 5, 1887.

<sup>70</sup>Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 126-127; Saffold Berney, *Hand-Book of Alabama: A Complete Index to the State, with Map* (Birmingham, 1892), 456n, 456-457; Ethel Marie Armes, *The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama* (Birmingham, 1910), 332, 335, 339, 340-342; John Bunyon Clark, *Populism in Alabama* (Auburn, 1927), 21-22.

Although the Bourbons espoused classical economic theories surprising that the state's fast-growing industries and their workers soon became significant factors in Alabama politics. and avoided overt connections of government with industry, many leaders of the Democratic party still felt that the state's industries received too much attention and too many advantages from the Bourbons. In fact, the rural elements of the party "denounced what appeared to them an increasingly favorable attitude of party and state leaders toward industrial progress."<sup>70</sup> One of the strongest statements in this regard came from Robert McKee, editor of the Selma *Southern Argus*, who feared that Alabama under the Bourbons fast was becoming a place where "corporations, and capital, and the lawyers they own, govern to enrich the few at the expense of the many."<sup>71</sup> When in 1885 a big boom began in the Birmingham area, disputes over economic policies soon emerged and "accentuated" the differences between "rural-agrarian" and "urban-industrial" elements within the Democratic party. This situation helped cause the deadlock at the 1886 Democratic State Convention, where "intra-party discord" came to a head until the various elements of the party compromised by going along with the nomination for Governor of Thomas Seay — a young "dark-horse" candidate from Greensboro.<sup>72</sup> Despite the convention's temporary success in smoothing-over the Democrats' differences, there still were plenty of Alabamians around after 1886 who "would call a mass meeting and give all promoters of industrial enterprises just twenty-four hours to get out of the State."<sup>73</sup> These people obviously did not share the devotion of many Bourbons to the "New South Creed" — or what has been described by one historian as a postwar "mythology" which the Bourbons "incorporated to buttress the new order."<sup>74</sup> For many Bourbons, the "new order" which they hoped would

<sup>70</sup>Going, *Bourbon Democracy*, 46.

<sup>71</sup>Robert McKee to R. W. Cobb, August 23, 1883, Robert McKee Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery. See also the editorials by Ben Herr, another influential Democratic journalist, in the *Livingston Journal*, especially April 12, 1888. It is noteworthy that some elements of the Democratic Party looked upon McKee as the archetypal Bourbon. See *Huntsville Advocate*, September 7, 1881 and *Birmingham Chronicle*, December 16, 1886, cited in Going, *Bourbon Democracy*, 46.

<sup>72</sup>Going, *Bourbon Democracy*, 45, 48-49.

<sup>73</sup>*Livingston Journal*, April 12, 1888.

<sup>74</sup>Tindall, *The Persistent Tradition*, 21.

become reality was "a South which venerated its past, but sought a progressive future of industrial development and agricultural diversification."<sup>75</sup> To many contemporary Alabamians as well as many later historians, however, the Bourbons seemed willing to stress industrial development even at the expense of the state's agricultural interests.<sup>76</sup> The trend seemed clear: when Alabama's industries expanded the Bourbons cheered, but the defects of industry, the ills it caused, and its unsettling effects on the former agricultural emphasis of Alabama life apparently did not greatly trouble the majority of Bourbons. Yet what the Bourbons actually did in the form of overt action to create this impression was not as clear as their vocal support of the "New South Creed" and their loud applause for industrial development. In fact, the Bourbons carefully upheld the laissez faire philosophy which dominated economic thought in the period: Alabama's industries received little direct state aid from the Bourbons, whose other actions and policies generally reflected the same conservative tradition. Moreover, when the Bourbons took over the state government, they made economy the watchword, reduced the size of the government, and lowered the tax rates until in 1890 Alabama had the lowest rates in the South except for North Carolina.<sup>77</sup>

Several factors contributed to the Democratic party's success in keeping together under one roof such antagonistic elements as the rural-agrarians and the "promoters of industrial enterprises." Some of these included the strength of white

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.* See also, Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (Baton Rouge, 1970).

<sup>76</sup>Robert McKee to R. W. Cobb, August 23, 1883, McKee Papers; *Livingston Journal*, January 27, 1887, April 12, 1888; *Huntsville Weekly Mercury*, January 16, 1889; Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 97; Going, *Bourbon Democracy*, 45-49, 110-113. For comments applauding the Bourbons' concern for "industrial development," see, for example, *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, November 26, 1885. Professor C. Vann Woodward has concluded that southern farmers did not "seriously question the philosophy of the New Order" until the mid-eighties. See *Origins of the New South*, 176. Jonathan M. Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge, 1978), says that Alabama society after the Civil War did not become a new order dominated by New South industrialists, for the conservative Old South planter class's supremacy generally remained intact with only a few "inadvertent" changes.

<sup>77</sup>Armes, *Story of Coal and Iron*, 225-256; Going, *Bourbon Democracy*, 109-110, 45-48, 116-118, 126, 92; *Constitution of Alabama*, 1875; *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, February 24 (misprinted as February 23), 1887; *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, March 3, 1887.



supremacy as an ethnocultural issue, the political and institutional realities arising from the functioning of the party's loose-knit state-wide organization, and the broad appeal of traditional Democratic views on economics and politics. During the Jacksonian era, the economic and political principles of the Democratic party became the dominant American paradigm on such matters and soon attained the power of an official dogma in their hold on many people's minds.<sup>78</sup> This paradigm consisted of two basic elements: Adam Smith's economic doctrines and Thomas Jefferson's (or the Antifederalists') political doctrines. The main purpose of the first element was to promote competition and localize the economy while the primary purpose of the second element was to guard against dangerous centralization in the government.<sup>79</sup> Before the Civil War, of course, the localistic Jacksonian Democratic paradigm had faced some ideological competition in the arena of Alabama politics from the translocal Whig (or Hamiltonian) position, which stressed the need for a strong, central government to do such things as exercise control over the economy.<sup>80</sup> However, even if some former Whigs still kept their Hamiltonian principles after entering the Democratic party during Reconstruction, for many years the political situation in Alabama required that the new Bourbon coalition display at least temporarily a facade of support for the Democratic paradigm. Therefore,

<sup>78</sup>See Robert Kelley, *The Transatlantic Persuasion: The Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone* (New York, 1969). On paradigm analysis as a method of historical investigation, see Gene Wise, *American Historical Explanations: A Strategy for Grounded Inquiry* (Homewood, Ill., 1973).

<sup>79</sup>For such views in Alabama, see Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, September 18, 1884; Huntsville *Weekly Mercury*, October 12, 1887, March 28, 1888, March 6, 1889; Livingston *Journal*, January 6, February 24, March 3 (citing Montgomery *Advertiser*), March 17, 24, June 9, May 12, 1887. A useful analysis of the thought of a few representative conservative Alabama leaders of this period is Hugh Charles Davis, "An Analysis of the Rationale of Representative Conservative Alabamians, 1874-1914" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1964). On Smithian economic principles, see Joseph Cropsey, *Polity and Economy: An Interpretation of the Principles of Adam Smith* (The Hague, Netherlands, 1957). On Antifederalist political principles, see Jackson Turner Main, *The Anti-Federalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788* (Chapel Hill, 1961); Cecilia M. Kenyon, "Men of Little Faith: The Anti-Federalists on the Nature of Representative Government," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. Ser., XII (1955), 3-43.

<sup>80</sup>On the Whig's principles, see Glyndon G. Van Deusen, "Some Aspects of Whig Thought and Theory in the Jacksonian Period," *American Historical Review*, LXIII (1958), 305-322.

the doctrines of Adam Smith and Thomas Jefferson, without any effective ideological competition after Reconstruction, soon became something akin to an orthodox creed for many members of the new political coalition. Although at first the Democratic paradigm probably had less binding force than most contemporary observers thought, its effectiveness soon increased as more and more Whiggish Bourbons and backers of the "New South Creed" discovered the advantages to be derived for railroads and other large-scale enterprises from support of such traditional Democratic principles as laissez faire and limited government.

All this is not a refutation of the historical generalization that "Bourbon regimes never achieved monolithic unity either in philosophy or government," for the generalization definitely applies to Alabama.<sup>81</sup> There the Bourbon coalition consisted of many divergent groups which sometimes had serious difficulty in smoothing-over their differences.<sup>82</sup> One Democratic editor described his party as "a strange lot" comprised of many "discordant elements". Some favored federal and state aid to internal improvements while others did not; some supported a protective tariff which others opposed vehemently; some demanded stricter government regulation of railroads but others called for less of the same thing; some advocated prohibition and others strongly disagreed.<sup>83</sup> Historians also have divided the Democratic party into many conflicting groups: "Bosses," "Planters," "Conservatives," "Progressives," the "rural-agrarian" wing, the "urban-industrial" wing.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, contemporary observers predicted that continued industrial development and the related tariff issue would exacerbate the ideological differences between old Whigs and old Democrats until finally they would split up the new coalition into groups similar to the two old parties.<sup>85</sup> Meanwhile, other related ideological differences seriously threatened Democratic unity.

<sup>81</sup>The quotation is from Tindall, *The Persistent Tradition*, 15.

<sup>82</sup>For information on such factionalism in another southern state, see Daniel Merrett Robinson, *Bob Taylor and the Agrarian Revolt in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill, 1935); Roger Hart, *Redeemers, Bourbons, and Populists: Tennessee, 1870-1896* (Baton Rouge, 1975).

<sup>83</sup>*Calera Shelby Sentinel*, May 13, March 18, 1886.

<sup>84</sup>Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism*, chapter 10; Goins, *Bourbon Democracy*, 45, 207.

<sup>85</sup>See, for example, *Livingston Journal*, March 10, 1887.



Opposite the proponents of the "New South Creed" stood those Alabamians who believed that improvement of the state's agricultural economy should be the top priority and that the New South should be a place where small farmers could enjoy the good rural life of the Jeffersonian "agrarian myth."<sup>86</sup>

Even if such differences made it unlikely that in a serious political crisis the new coalition could be held together by either the Democratic paradigm or the "New South Creed," the party still could be maintained at least temporarily by the binding force of white supremacy and by the political realities arising from the Democracy's structure. This was true in part because, as one historian has said, "voters were often more concerned with matters which impinged on their lives directly and which immediately challenged their personally structured value systems than they were with national [or even regional] problems whose direct salience was not clearly perceptible to them."<sup>87</sup> As an ethnocultural issue which stirred strong emotions, white supremacy was an important part of most white Alabamians' "personally structured value systems."<sup>88</sup> Unless a serious economic crisis like the depression of the 1890s allowed economic issues to capture the voters' attention, ethnocultural issues and all kinds of local matters usually dominated American politics in most places in the late nineteenth cen-

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<sup>86</sup>See, for example, Athens *Alabama Farmer*, September 5, 1888. For an example of a pro-agrarian editor's New South boosterism, see Athens *Alliance Banner*, March 15, 1888. A penetrating look at the split in Alabama society between those devoted to the "New South Creed" and those devoted to the preservation of the status quo is Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South*. On the "agrarian myth," see Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York, 1955), chapter 1.

<sup>87</sup>Paul Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900* (New York, 1970), 18. For a criticism of Kleppner's methodology, see James Wright's essay in Allan Bogue, ed., *Emerging Theoretical Models in Social and Political History* (Beverly Hills, 1973).

<sup>88</sup>For examples of a typical white Alabamian's attitudes toward blacks as well as the political uses made of the white supremacy issue, see Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, July 30, 1885, May 27, 1886. Additional information on the impact of the white supremacy issue on Alabama politics can be gained from Williamson, "The Alabama Election of 1874." See also, Lawrence J. Friedman, *The White Savage: Racial Fantasies in the Postbellum South* (Englewood Cliffs, 1970); Guion G. Johnson, "The Ideology of White Supremacy," in Fletcher M. Green, ed., *Essays in Southern History* (Chapel Hill, 1949); Claude H. Nolen, *The Negro's Image in the South: The Anatomy of White Supremacy* (Lexington, 1967).

ture.<sup>89</sup> This state of affairs also contributed to the cohesiveness of the Alabama Democratic party by permitting it to avoid discussion of most matters which would have been divisive. Another unifying factor was the party's structure. The Democracy was a loose alliance of county courthouse rings held together by such political and institutional realities as the manner in which many of the party's political practices served the interests of local politicians. One of these was how the governor normally used his power of appointment in filling such local offices as register in chancery, solicitor, coroner, or justice of the peace. After the members of a county courthouse ring decided among themselves who should be appointed, a delegation often visited the governor to inform him of their choice; then the governor appointed the person nominated by the local ruling clique.<sup>90</sup> This sort of practice almost never stirred up any divisive ideological questions because such things mattered very little to most local leaders, especially when the "spoils of office" were at stake. "Without patronage to be disposed of and with nothing but questions of public policy to be settled at election here," wrote one Democratic editor, "universal apathy would prevail."<sup>91</sup> For most local politicians the "essence of politics" was to get power.<sup>92</sup> After they became part of the power structure, moreover, they had compelling reasons to remain within the Democratic party and avoid any divisive issues which might have disrupted it. At the same time, however, the danger of intra-party strife probably increased as the state-wide organization became looser and looser until finally it existed "only on paper, and . . . by suffrage," leaving nothing in its place which could effectively use such political tools of persuasion as patronage in keeping the party together and in getting it moving in the same general

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<sup>89</sup>See Richard Jensen, *The Winning of the Midwest: Social and Political Conflict, 1888-1896* (Chicago, 1971); Frederick C. Luebke, *Immigrants and Politics: The Germans of Nebraska, 1880-1900* (Lincoln, 1969); Samuel McSeveney, *The Politics of Depression: Political Behavior in the Northeast, 1893-1896* (New York, 1972); Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture*.

<sup>90</sup>See, for example, *Montgomery Advertiser*, September 26, 1885; *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, March 19, 1885, April 1, 1887; *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, March 31, June 2, 1887.

<sup>91</sup>*Calera Shelby Sentinel*, December 24, 1885.

<sup>92</sup>*Huntsville Weekly Mercury*, August 24, 1887. See also, *Livingston Journal*, March 3, 1887.

direction.<sup>93</sup>

Although the lack of an effective central organization made disruption of the Democratic party more likely, the Bourbons could still stave off most threats to their political hegemony by using such weapons as their control of the state government, the election machinery, and the black vote. In the late 1870s, the state legislature made courts of county commissioners appointive by the governor in order to prevent the election of black or Radical Republican officials; an 1879 election law facilitated not only the disqualification of valid Republican ballots but also the entry of phony Democratic ballots into boxes; before the last pockets of Radical Republican resistance all but disappeared, the Democrats used their power in the legislature to gerrymander the state so that most of the black belt counties, the location of the biggest Republican majorities, fell into one congressional district. As a result of such tactics, Bourbon power soon became secure while the Republicans became politically impotent. Once the Bourbons held the reins of power, moreover, they turned the black belt and that area's heavy black vote into important sources of Democratic strength. During the Redemption era the Bourbons had used all forms of intimidation from threats to guns to drive the blacks from the polls. After regaining control of the state government, however, the Bourbons, who often got valuable assistance from black leaders, then employed the black vote as a means of maintaining Democratic political hegemony.<sup>94</sup> The Bourbons used less force than in earlier days, but their tactics still covered almost the entire field of election crimes and chicanery: they included stealing ballot boxes, putting polls at unannounced places, falsifying voter registrations, il-

<sup>93</sup>Robert McKee to John T. Morgan, January 8, 1882, McKee Papers. For background information on the structure of political institutions in the late nineteenth century, see Robert D. Marcus, *Grand Old Party: Political Structure in the Gilded Age, 1880-1896* (New York, 1971); William J. Cooper, Jr., *The Conservative Regime: South Carolina, 1877-1890* (Baltimore, 1968); David J. Rothman, *Politics and Power: The United States Senate, 1869-1901* (Cambridge, 1966).

<sup>94</sup>Malcolm Cook McMillan, *Constitutional Development in Alabama, 1798-1901: A Study in Politics, the Negro, and Sectionalism* (Chapel Hill, 1955), 217; Goings, *Bourbon Democracy*, 35-36; Six Mile Bibb *Blade*, May 19, 1887; *Columbiana Banner of Liberty*, March 18, 1886; *Guntersville Democrat*, November 16, 1882. See also, Joseph Matt Brittain, "Negro Suffrage and Politics in Alabama Since 1870" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1958).

legally arresting voters on election days, bribing voters, and failing to set up polls in places where heavy opposition was expected. In addition, the 1875 Alabama constitution, which was passed by the Democrats soon after they regained power, in effect gave over representation to the black belt by basing that region's representation on politically weak but numerically heavy black populations. By such methods the Bourbons took control of the black belt and its black voters and molded them into a solid core of Bourbon strength.

In some ways, however, the black vote remained a source of lingering insecurity for the Democrats. Although it was one of the keys to Bourbon power, it could become a source of controversy if party splits occurred. In such a situation, the black vote might be courted by several factions of the Democratic party and perhaps even could become the basis of destructive realignments. Or it might be lost altogether to the Republicans. Several related factors, including the Democrats' lingering insecurity about the black vote, produced such strong sentiments in favor of Negro disfranchisement that Governor Thomas Seay in 1886 recommended calling a constitutional convention to settle the suffrage question.<sup>95</sup> Three years later the Alabama legislature almost passed a bill designed to disfranchise blacks by setting up elaborate new voting procedures and establishing new qualifications for voting.<sup>96</sup> Yet the movement for Negro disfranchisement faded before the specter of federal intervention, the unwillingness of black belt Bourbons to relinquish "their" black votes, and the opposition of the predominantly white counties where many people feared that disfranchisement of the blacks would be accompanied by the same thing for many "poor whites."

Other matters related to the status of blacks in Alabama society had political significance in the late nineteenth century. Most white Alabamians must have thought that the Bourbons had the best outlook on these ethnocultural issues, for the Bourbons owed much of their political success to the white voters' favorable response to their position on the Negro's role in post-Reconstruction Alabama. During the redemption era and

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<sup>95</sup>Clark, *Populism in Alabama*, 19.

<sup>96</sup>Clanton *Chilton View*, January 24, 1889; Huntsville *Weekly Mercury*, March 6, 1889.



in later years, Democratic campaigns emphasized the need for white unity in the face of the "Negro threat."<sup>97</sup> In these campaigns the "cry and the chief plank of Bourbon Democracy [was] the 'nigger,'" while the Democrats pictured the Republicans as the party of "renegade white men" and "thick-lipped negroes."<sup>98</sup> White solidarity behind the Bourbons, as the leaders of the white man's party, had to be maintained at all costs if white supremacy was to be preserved in Alabama. But what did the Bourbons mean by "white supremacy?" Only a few Democrats would have argued with the contention that the changes wrought by emancipation and Reconstruction made necessary a re-definition of the Negro's place in Alabama society. Yet the place set aside for blacks by virtually all Bourbons amounted to nothing new: it was a reaffirmation of most features of the antebellum Alabama system of race relations and it even reestablished many racial customs practiced under slavery, altering some customs only where legal modifications had become necessary. One reason that the Bourbons' policy advanced their political fortunes was that white Alabamians "did not believe that the loss of the war meant accepting a political and social . . . revolution in regard to the Negro."<sup>99</sup> Most whites could not conceive of any dramatic changes in their relationship with an "animal" who "resembled the human race" but whose skull and lips were thick and whose actions often were "savage," "brutal," "vicious," and "ferocious."<sup>100</sup> Many white Alabamians even supported "colonization" or the creation of a separate black state or some other scheme for getting rid of the state's black population.<sup>101</sup> While commenting on such sentiments, a Democratic newspaper reporter said:

There was a road [gang] working near me the other day, and the white men got to talking about the negro, and they were all of one mind. They wanted him to go, and said they would rather be taxed for that

<sup>97</sup>See, for example, *Mobile Register*, May 30, June 6, July, 11, 1874; *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, May 27, October 28, 1886; *Huntsville Weekly Mercury*, March 13, 1889; *Birmingham Age-Herald*, July 27, 1890.

<sup>98</sup>*Huntsville Gazette*, December 17, 1887; *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, October 4, 1888.

<sup>99</sup>McMillan, *Constitutional Development in Alabama*, 362.

<sup>100</sup>See *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, July 23, 30, February 19, 25, 1885.

<sup>101</sup>*Livingston Journal*, August 9, 1889; *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, July 30, 1885, January 3, 1889; *Huntsville Weekly Mercury*, January 2, 1889.



purpose than any other. They are tired of his thieving, and they live in apprehension of something worse that he may do, for nobody knows where the next victim may be found.<sup>102</sup>

The Bourbons, however, rejected virulent racism in favor of a paternalistic policy. They expected that the best class of whites would assume political and economic control of blacks and also give concern to their advancement within the limits of Alabama's racial customs.<sup>103</sup> Black leaders, who were induced by Democratic patronage and the lack of better alternatives (extreme racism was perhaps the most likely alternative), supported the Bourbons and their paternalistic system, while many northerners acquiesced in what was happening.<sup>104</sup> As a result, many Alabamians soon joined southerners elsewhere in a call for legislation to settle the question of the Negro's place in society.<sup>105</sup> "[A]ll there is to it," wrote Ben Herr, the well-known Bourbon editor of the *Livingston Journal*, "is to let the Southern States have the rights that Northern States have to manage their own affairs. When that is done the negro will quietly and happily take up his estate according to his color and inferior position, and the intelligence of the country will do for him better than he can do for himself."<sup>106</sup> Alabama and the other southern states gradually put into effect a new codification of the status of blacks. In Alabama this development occurred during the final years of Bourbon control, after many racial customs had already hardened into practically unbreakable rules requiring almost complete segregation of the races in such places as hotels, schools, railroad cars, and even railroad stations.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>102</sup>Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, September 17, 1887.

<sup>103</sup>See *Ibid.*, September 17, 1885, August 25, 1887. For late nineteenth century views on the nature of paternalism under slavery, see *Livingston Journal*, September 27, 1889.

<sup>104</sup>C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (3rd. rev. ed., New York, 1974), 51; *The Burden of Southern History* (rev. ed., New York, 1968), 81-82. See also, *Livingston Journal*, January 27, 1887, March 15, 1888, October 11, 18, 1889; *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, May 19, October 20, 1887; *Huntsville Gazette*, September 24, 1887.

<sup>105</sup>Clanton *Chilton View*, October 3, 10, 1889; *Livingston Journal*, October 10, 1890.

<sup>106</sup>*Livingston Journal*, October 18, 1889.

<sup>107</sup>*Six Mile Bibb Blade*, March 10, 1887, July 19, December 6, 20, 1888; *Huntsville Weekly Mercury*, May 2, 1888; *Huntsville Gazette*, January 21, February 18, 1888; *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, September 1, 1886.

Although white supremacy seemed more and more secure and racism gradually declined as an overt issue, the Bourbons still tried to avoid any meaningful discussion of such other issues as the declining status of agriculture.<sup>108</sup> The *Birmingham Herald* blamed this situation on the fact that "politics in this state are monopolized by cross road lawyers" who thought of almost nothing except the spoils of office.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, one Democratic editor warned: "There are too many discordant elements in Alabama politics to unnecessarily inject into it a very dangerous factor [such as a potentially divisive issue] and create a nucleus around which a formidable party might be quickly formed."<sup>110</sup> A few pleas for some economic legislation did appear, and the state's convict lease system drew some criticism, but no significant progressive spirit existed in Alabama to encourage far-reaching economic and social legislation.<sup>111</sup> The lack of such a spirit originated in large part from the widespread acceptance of laissez faire philosophy during the Gilded Age.<sup>112</sup> An added factor in the South, moreover, was the lack of native southern criticism. Faced with a strong defensive reaction to criticism of the region, native southern critics appeared only infrequently and followed a cautious policy, offering little more than an occasional plea for a more humanitarian outlook to appear in mankind or making a rare call for increased government activity to solve the problems of the age.<sup>113</sup>

At the same time, Bourbon governments in Alabama and

<sup>108</sup>Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, March 18, May 13, 1886; Huntsville *Gazette*, December 17, 1887.

<sup>109</sup>Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, January 12, 1888, quoting *Birmingham Herald*.

<sup>110</sup>Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, March 18, 1886.

<sup>111</sup>See *Livingston Journal*, February 14, August 30, 1889; Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, March 18, August 11, 1886; Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, February 10, 1887.

<sup>112</sup>See C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (rev. ed., Garden City, 1956), 265-267; Wallace Farnham, "The Weakened Spring of Government: A Study of Nineteenth-Century American History," *American Historical Review*, LXVIII (April, 1963), 662-680.

<sup>113</sup>For examples of this defensive reaction, see Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, February 16, 1888; Athens *Alabama Farmer*, November 21, 1888, citing *Montgomery Dispatch*. See also, Daniel Lee Cloyd, "Prelude to Reform: Political, Economic, and Social Thought of Alabama Baptists, 1877-1890," *Alabama Review*, XXXI (January, 1978), 48-64. On southern dissenters in the late nineteenth century, see Carl N. Degler, *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1974), 191-371.

throughout the South gained a reputation for honesty and purity that they did not deserve. Their association with the redemption of white rule, the preservation of white supremacy, and the "Lost Cause of the Confederacy" produced a shroud of myth around their operations.<sup>114</sup> To their benefit the Bourbons were contrasted with the Radical Republicans in a manner which called into play all the real and imagined horrors of Reconstruction: whereas the Radicals were pictured as advocates of racial amalgamation, the Bourbons were cast in the role of defenders of the white race; whereas the Radicals were labeled corrupt, the Bourbons were made out to be the foes of corruption, even though corruption may have increased under the Democrats. Because the Bourbons' special mythology buttressed their power, opposition to their policies or serious proposals for economic and social reform did not arise easily from within the Democratic party. For most people who disagreed with the Bourbons' policies, the only chance for a proper hearing was with some source outside the party. Before the 1890s, however, this apparently did not matter very much to most Alabama voters, because until then few members of the electorate supported any alternatives to the group in power. Either being attracted by the Bourbons' special appeal or stymied by the realities of Bourbon power, most Alabamians continued to vote Democratic — or not at all.

Yet some weak political opposition to the Bourbons did arise in the late seventies and early eighties. The Greenback-Labor party, known in Alabama as the Anti-Bourbon party, appeared in the state by about 1880. On the national level this group had some connections with the granger movement and focused on economic issues. At their 1880 state convention in Montgomery, the Anti-Bourbons adopted a platform that copied the platform of the national greenbackers, who had attracted an agrarian following by calling for the reversal of many national economic policies, such as the resumption of specie payments, which many farmers considered to be detrimental to their interests. In addition to several financial planks borrowed from the national greenbackers, the Anti-Bourbon platform contained proposals for election reforms and tax reforms, condemned the convict lease system, and criticized the Bour-

<sup>114</sup>See Tindall, *The Persistent Tradition*, 20-23; Gaston, *The New South Creed*, especially 217-246.

bons' overweening interest in business. On the other hand, the Anti-Bourbons took no strong stand in regard to the railroads at a time when the question of the railroad commission was being discussed throughout the state. For practical reasons, the Anti-Bourbons quickly joined with the state's Republican party and boldly nominated gubernatorial candidates in 1880, 1882, and 1884.<sup>115</sup> Even though the Anti-Bourbons enjoyed virtually no political success and got noticeable support only in North Alabama, they nevertheless raised some significant issues and actually attempted to split the solidarity of the Democracy. Because the Democratic party had been artificially welded together along uneven seams, when opposing groups such as the Anti-Bourbons exerted themselves then party cohesion could become difficult to maintain. By the mid-1880s, the Bourbons — who could not easily have avoided being affected in some way by the greenbackers and the growing class-consciousness among farmers — were experiencing internal party strife over leadership, management, and policy. Party factionalism soon reached dangerous proportions, culminating in the open battle at the 1886 convention. Few contemporary political observers then would have doubted that the rise of a large, organized protest group with appealing ideas would pose a serious threat to the Bourbon's control of a united Democratic party.

The Grange had almost disappeared from Alabama by the 1880s, but many farmers still followed the grangers' example by joining and supporting agrarian organizations. During the early eighties, numerous local farm clubs sprouted up sporadically and then often vanished. While they existed these groups expressed their concern over the state's agricultural distress and discussed many possible solutions to the plight of the farmers.<sup>116</sup> "Every farmer in Alabama should be a member of a farmers' club or a grange," said the *Montgomery Southern Agriculturist*, "they are educators to the agriculturists and will do great good in stimulating the people to excell."<sup>117</sup> Some farm

<sup>115</sup>Clark, *Populism in Alabama*, 24-26, 28.

<sup>116</sup>Guntersville *Democrat*, May 12, 1887; Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, July 23, 30, September 10, 1885, December 9, 1886; Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, February 24 (misprinted as February 23), March 3, 10, 31, 1887.

<sup>117</sup>Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, November 25, 1886, quoting *Montgomery Southern Agriculturist*.



clubs even declared that the depressed agrarian class should be brought together in an organization that would get involved in politics on their behalf.<sup>118</sup> In reaction to this sentiment, some local candidates for office began appearing before the clubs. However, because the farm clubs had neither a central organization with state-wide leadership nor a clear program, they had only local political significance.

In response to the need for an effective statewide organization of farmers and to the act which established the Alabama Department of Agriculture, Edward Chambers Betts, the first Commissioner of Agriculture, sought to revive the State Agricultural Society. His call to many of Alabama's leading agriculturists resulted in a convention for that purpose. One hundred, twenty-one delegates from dozens of local farm clubs and some of the few remaining granges met in Montgomery in 1884 and successfully resurrected the society.<sup>119</sup> Most of the State Agricultural Society's leaders came from the upper class and most probably came from the front ranks of the Bourbon Democrats. As a group they did not represent the average Alabama farmer, and most of them certainly did not want to see the masses of small farmers organized for what might become disruptive political action.<sup>120</sup> In a speech delivered at the Agricultural Society's third annual convention in 1886, Mayor William Henry Skaggs of Talladega warned of the growing likelihood of dangerous splits in the Democratic party if agrarian organizations became further involved in politics. He also reminded the delegates of the grave dangers to white rule that any such splits would pose. Opposing factions probably would begin openly courting black votes and might even make them once again a major factor, perhaps even the key to power, in Alabama politics. In such circumstances, Skaggs implied, any number of unimaginable horrors would be possible.<sup>121</sup>

Skaggs did not need to worry, however, for the Agricul-

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<sup>118</sup>See, for example, *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, February 10, 1887.

<sup>119</sup>*Montgomery Advertiser*, August 2, 29, 1884. See also, *Proceedings of the First Annual Session of the Alabama State Agricultural Society*, 1884. For a copy of the Agricultural Society's constitution, see *Calera Shelby Sentinel*, October 28, 1886.

<sup>120</sup>Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 110.

<sup>121</sup>*Proceedings of the Third Annual Session of the Alabama State Agricultural Society*, 1886, 6-8.



tural Society maintained a strict non-partisan policy and sought only to improve the educational level of Alabama's farmers.<sup>122</sup> As a result, the organization evolved gradually into an information dispensing arm of the Department of Agriculture, distributing pamphlets on scientific agriculture and disseminating news of the department's activities throughout the farmers' ranks. At the society's annual conventions, the delegates discussed the sad condition of agriculture and concluded that it stemmed from such problems as the inadequacies of the younger generation of both black and white laborers, the adverse effects of the lien system, the deficiencies of the school system, and the corruption of political parties. Because of its non-partisan policy, however, the Agricultural Society made no real effort to get the Bourbons to solve either these problems or the others worrying the state's agriculturists. Moreover, the society's programs and ideas apparently had little appeal to the average farmer, while its local affiliates lacked permanence and often shifted their allegiance back and forth between the local farm clubs, the granges, and the national farmers' organizations which began appearing in Alabama in the mid-1880s.

One of these national farmers' organizations was the Agricultural Wheel. Begun in Arkansas in the early 1880s with the main purpose of destroying the lien system by forming cooperatives, the Wheel spread to Alabama in 1886. Once in the state, the Wheel established an official newspaper, the Bell-green *Alabama State Wheel*, and leveled a barrage of criticism at the lien system, even calling it a plot of Satan. In addition, the organization called for crop diversification and demanded beneficial legislation on such matters as taxes, interest rates, and the currency issue. Because many of its national leaders tended to favor far-reaching government action to solve the farmers' problems, the Wheel gained a reputation for being socialistic and even dangerous. The Wheel had some strength in the Tennessee River Valley of North Alabama, but internal strife between those members who called for political action and those who advocated a non-partisan policy kept the organization from presenting a united front and prevented it from

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<sup>122</sup>*Proceedings of the Second Semi-Annual Session of the Alabama State Agricultural Society*, 1887, 11; *Proceedings of the First Semi-Annual Session of the Alabama State Agricultural Society*, 1885, 175.

taking firm root across the state.<sup>123</sup>

Alabama farmers gave the Southern Farmers' Alliance (the National Farmers' Alliance and Co-operative Union) a much better reception when it entered the state. The Southern Alliance appeared in Texas in the late seventies and early eighties. After some growth in members (mostly in Texas), the group's leaders early in 1887 adopted an aggressive expansion program as part of an effort to avoid a split over the political action issue that had crippled the Wheel.<sup>124</sup> Organizers appeared in Alabama in the spring of 1887 and rapidly formed local alliances throughout the state, frequently "swallowing up" the numerous farm clubs, granges, and agricultural societies which had been in existence for several years.<sup>125</sup> One local correspondent of the *Six Mile Bibb Blade* noted at the time that the "farmers alliance is increasing daily in strength in these ends of the earth," while the *Blade's* editor commented on how the "membership of this society seems to be very much attached to it."<sup>126</sup> After an unsuccessful first effort, a state convention held in Madison County in August 1887 established the Alabama State Alliance. As its first president, the new group chose Samuel M. Adams, a Bibb County minister who had been a leader in organizing many local alliances.<sup>127</sup> The organization of new lodges took place so rapidly that by late 1889 the Alabama State Alliance claimed over 3,000 local alliances with 125,000 members.<sup>128</sup> "The farmers are rising in one solid phalanx," declared alliancewoman Anna Shaw, "and are battling for their rights and justice."<sup>129</sup>

The Alliance drew its members from a variety of rural

<sup>123</sup>Morgan, *Wheel and Alliance*, 62, 83-85, 72-74, 57-58; Athens *Alliance Banner*, February 10, 1888; Clanton *Chilton View*, August 8, 1889; Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, August 4, 1887, citing Moulton *Advertiser*; Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 122-129.

<sup>124</sup>Robert C. McMath, Jr., *Populist Vanguard: A History of the Southern Farmers' Alliance* (Chapel Hill, 1975), 3-28.

<sup>125</sup>*Six Mile Bibb Blade*, April 7, 14, 21, May 5, 19, 1887; Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, July 21, 1887; Athens *Alabama Farmer*, July 18, 25, August 1, 1888, January 30, 1889; Albertville *Marshall County News*, November 15, 1894.

<sup>126</sup>*Six Mile Bibb Blade*, May 5, 12, 1887.

<sup>127</sup>Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 131, 133-134; *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, May 19, October, 27, 1887.

<sup>128</sup>Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 138.

<sup>129</sup>Athens *Alabama Farmer*, December 19, 1888.

groups. Most members were small farmers — “mostly poor white folks searching for that ‘Eldorado’ that we may never find but that we long for and hope for” — but those who joined include big planters, country preachers, country doctors, country school teachers, farm laborers, and mechanics.<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, a prominent Madison County citizen refused to join the new group because he thought “all of those who belong to it are the rag-tag and bobtail of creation.”<sup>131</sup> Such sentiments were widely held and probably owed much to the “special attention” given by Alliance organizers to “the poorer class” of “farmer, land-owner, and tenant” whom they sought out and met “in their fields” and “not in towns and court houses.”<sup>132</sup> The Alliance’s strength was greatest in the predominantly white counties “in the hilly and sandy sections of the State” and weakest “in the counties of the Black Belt,” the region of the best soils and the most extensive agricultural operations.<sup>133</sup> Many white tenants and sharecroppers joined the new organization even though their actions met with such strong opposition that they often refused to admit their membership due to fear of reprisals.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, however, many blacks failed to join because white landowners took a dim view of Alliance membership by their black tenants, especially in the black belt where blacks formed a majority of the population and farmed most of the lands.<sup>135</sup> Another factor which probably limited black membership was the refusal of the Alliance to give blacks equal status with whites.

Despite severe hardships, black farm groups did appear in Alabama. By 1888 the state press commented frequently on those black farm organizations which had entered Alabama.<sup>136</sup> The Wheel permitted separate black locals and a few of these probably appeared, but the largest Negro group was the Colored Farmers’ National Alliance (established in Texas as a national

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<sup>130</sup> Athens *Alliance Banner*, February 16, 1888; Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, April 14, 1887.

<sup>131</sup> Athens *Alabama Farmer*, January 30, 1889.

<sup>132</sup> Athens *Alliance Banner*, March 15, 1888.

<sup>133</sup> Athens *Alabama Farmer*, January 30, 1889.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, August 15, 1888.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, January 30, 1889.

<sup>136</sup> See Athens *Alliance Banner*, May 24, 1888; Athens *Alabama Farmer*, August 29, October 24, 1888, January 30, 1889; Clanton *Chilton View*, October 25, 1888; Livingston *Journal*, September 20, 27, 1889; Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, December 5, 1889.

organization in 1888).<sup>137</sup> The Colored Alliance apparently began gaining members in Alabama after a joint national convention of the Wheel and Alliance in December 1888 approved the creation of Colored Alliance locals.<sup>138</sup> Within the next year, a large contingent of black alliancemen came into existence in Alabama.<sup>139</sup> Many white Alabamians linked the Colored Alliance with the Republican party and with rumors circulating throughout the state of black "before dawn" terrorist groups which were supposed to be plotting to "clean the white rebs up women and children."<sup>140</sup> Such feelings combined with white racial attitudes to make the Alabama State Alliance extremely cautious when discussing the issue of organizing blacks.<sup>141</sup> "I spect you uns is heard we're gwine ter Liance the nigger," wrote "Liance Man" in the *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, "but we're just agwine to splanify a few things to um sorter like er side show."<sup>142</sup> While the matter was before the Alliance, a typical local reaction came from the Valley Creek Alliance which dealt with the question simply by resolving "that we believe in the superiority of the white race over the negro race."<sup>143</sup> Hector D. Lane, then editor of the *Athens Alabama Farmer* and an important Alliance leader, declared that he "would not approve of any semblance of social equality" but also said he did not mind if the blacks formed their own completely separate "colored alliances" because "the negro farmer is straining in the same rut that the poor white man of the south is in." In addition, Lane explained, other factors has to be considered: "The negro lies like a club between the Alliance and the Anti-Alliance[;] we can take him up and use him against them, if not, he is the most dangerous weapon that can be used against us."<sup>144</sup> Even though many white alliancemen still had strong misgivings about any kind of black organization, the Alabama State Alliance endorsed "the organization of the colored peo-

<sup>137</sup>See Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 127; McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 44-45.

<sup>138</sup>For reports on the meeting held at Meridian, Mississippi, see *Athens Alabama Farmer*, January 2, 9, 1889.

<sup>139</sup>*Clanton Chilton View*, October 25, 1888; *Athens Alabama Farmer*, January 30, 1889.

<sup>140</sup>*Livingston Journal*, September 27, 20, 1888.

<sup>141</sup>See *Athens Alliance Banner*, May 24, 1888.

<sup>142</sup>*Six Mile Bibb Blade*, June 7, 1888.

<sup>143</sup>*Athens Alliance Banner*, May 3, 1888.

<sup>144</sup>*Athens Alabama Farmer*, October 24, 1888.

ple.”<sup>145</sup> It supported only segregated black groups, however, and apparently it did so only to gain black support for the aims of the white man’s Alliance.

During its first three years, the Alabama State Alliance attracted a large rural following by presenting the farmers with what amounted to a compelling agrarian ideology, while also carrying on educational activities and engaging in co-operative ventures. Like the grangers before them, the Alliance leaders believed that the farmers had to be shown the causes of their plight and taught many things related to their welfare: the bad results of overproduction and wasteful farming methods, the crushing impact of the credit system, the “extortions” of speculators and middlemen, the indifference and corruption of politicians, the ill effects of monopolies and the protective tariff, the inequities of the taxation system, the advantages of crop diversification and scientific agriculture, and above all the benefits of cooperation. These subjects and others like them served as the material for numerous newspaper articles and for countless speeches delivered throughout Alabama before thousands of farmers by hundreds of national, state, and local Alliance lecturers.<sup>146</sup> In 1891 Leonidas Lafayette Polk of North Carolina, national president of the Southern Alliance, declared the group’s primary goal to be united action to restore the equilibrium which he said once had existed in American government and which had to be re-created if the farmers were to gain relief.<sup>147</sup> Before the Alliance tried to have such a direct impact on the political system, however, it sought to achieve its agrarian goals through “co-operation,” which Harry G. McCall, a leader in the Alliance movement and at one time the editor of the *Montgomery Alliance Advocate*, defined as the farmers’ application to their situation of “The Brotherhood of Man” as expressed by Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>148</sup> For many

<sup>145</sup>*Ibid.*, August 29, 1888.

<sup>146</sup>See Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, July 14, 1887, April 19, 1888, January 3, December 5, 1889; Clanton *Chilton View*, November 28, 1889; Athens *Alabama Farmer*, September 5, November 7, 1888; Athens *Alliance Banner*, January 13, February 10, 16, May 31, 1888; Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, April 14, 1887, February 9, April 12, November 1, 1888.

<sup>147</sup>Leonidas L. Polk, “The Farmer’s Discontent,” *North American Review*, CLIII (July, 1891), 5-6.

<sup>148</sup>Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, January 3, 1889. For a critical view of the pessimistic outlook on the potential of the cooperative spirit, see Athens *Alliance Banner*, March 1, 1888.



Alliance members, cooperation was God's way of using the Alliance to uplift agriculture, which the alliancemen considered to be ordained by God as "the most important human activity," and to them cooperation became an almost perfect evangelical force. Alliancemen felt that cooperation would enable them to purge the existing social, political, and economic systems of all evils, thereby opening the door to an utopian era based on humanitarianism and other Christian principles.<sup>149</sup> The Alliance's "objects and purposes," said the *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, "if carried out will revolutionize the world."<sup>150</sup> Somewhere along the road to social and political perfection, agricultural self-sufficiency would spread; oppressive debt would disappear, while the economy would be restored to a cash basis and farmers would enter a golden age of prosperity. "[E]re long," declared John R. Christian, an Alexander City Alliance leader, "the good old ante-bellum days will return, I hope never to depart again."<sup>151</sup> If one of the Alliance's major goals was to restore the "anti-bellum days" when the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal of self-sufficient small farms was thought to be reality, then to succeed the Alliance had to engage good country folks who were untarnished by materialism and other "sinful secular associations" in a farmers' cooperative crusade against those unholy forces which to the agrarians often were associated with the rise of an urban, centralized bureaucratic nation and an interdependent national economy.<sup>152</sup>

Soon Alliance business cooperatives, pictured as a means of destroying the credit system and ending the "leechings" and "extortions" of middlemen, spread across Alabama. While they appeared in most parts of the state, the regions of the most tenancy and the greatest cotton production had few such ventures because many big landholders in those areas denied their tenants the right to participate in them. As a result, most Alliance cooperatives were located in the regions of more di-

<sup>149</sup>Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, March 15, April 19, 1888; J. H. Clegg to the editor, Athens *Alliance Banner*, May 24, 1888; Guntersville *Democrat*, July 28, April 14, September 15, 1887; Athens *Alabama Farmer*, July 18, August 1, October 17, December 19, 1888. See also, Morgan, *Wheel and Alliance*, 155.

<sup>150</sup>*Six Mile Bibb Blade*, April 14, 1887.

<sup>151</sup>Athens *Alliance Banner*, March 1, 1888.

<sup>152</sup>See *Six Mile Bibb Blade*, October 6, 1887, February 23, 1888; Athens *Alliance Banner*, January 20, February 23, 16, May 10, 24, 1888; Athens *Alabama Farmer*, August 22, June 20, 1888; Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, November 28, 1889.

versified corps and comparatively less tenancy.<sup>153</sup> The kinds of Alliance business enterprises pretty well covered the range of possibilities. An Alliance bank existed briefly in Selma, while alliancemen also organized cotton mills, gin houses, warehouses, country cooperatives, and innumerable country stores.<sup>154</sup> By early 1888 a typical county alliance boasted of "one store starting up on the Rochdale plan, two adopted merchants and a trade committee authorized to negotiate and make contracts with others."<sup>155</sup> On the state level, the biggest business venture was the Alliance State Exchange, which reportedly was "ready for business" in late 1888 but did not actually open until 1889.<sup>156</sup> While the movement to establish the Exchange spurred many Alabama alliancemen to bold action like "the old horse that was whipped," once it existed the Exchange functioned as a purchasing agent through which the farmers' orders were filled and from which the farmers could receive the cash advances needed by many of them before they could make purchases.<sup>157</sup> The Exchange did \$100,000 worth of business in 1889 and \$140,000 in 1890, but over-extension of its activities, a lack of experienced management, competition from firmly entrenched interests, and perhaps most of all "the enormity of the agricultural problems" facing "farmers who were caught up in the process of commercialization" contributed to its rapid decline. By 1891 the Exchange was ineffective.<sup>158</sup>

The Exchange and almost every other Alliance business enterprise faced determined opposition from established merchants and other enemies of the order. This opposition took many forms — from all types of legal and illegal harassment to the extreme cases where a few Alliance cooperatives were

<sup>153</sup>William Warren Rogers, "The Farmers' Alliance in Alabama," *Alabama Review*, XV (January, 1962), 11-14.

<sup>154</sup>Athens *Alabama Farmer*, August 15, October 24, December 5, 1888; Clanton *Chilton View*, October 24, 1889; Gadsden *Leader*, August 23, 1890; Calera *Shelby Sentinel*, September 22, 1887, February 23, 1888; Athens *Alliance Banner*, March 1, 1888; Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, October 20, 27, December 1, 1887, October 11, 1888; Guntersville *Democrat*, January 24, 1889, October 6, 1890.

<sup>155</sup>Athens *Alliance Banner*, February 3, 1888.

<sup>156</sup>Athens *Alabama Farmer*, September 5, 1888; Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 154-155.

<sup>157</sup>The quotation is from Athens *Alabama Farmer*, June 12, 1888. See also, Livingston *Journal*, July 26, 1889.

<sup>158</sup>Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 156-158; McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 58.

burned by arsonists and an Alliance storekeeper and his clerk were murdered in Dothan.<sup>159</sup> Yet not even such violence prevented the economic activities of the Alliance from producing some successes. The *Livingston Journal* gave the group all the credit for bringing about the sizeable drop in agricultural interest rates which occurred soon after the Alliance first appeared on the scene.<sup>160</sup> Competition from local Alliance stores reportedly caused the failure of some small businesses like J. J. Bailey & Co. of Tallapoosa County.<sup>161</sup> The Alliance won a major victory when its boycott forced the "jute-bagging trust" to reduce its prices.<sup>162</sup> Under a typical and widespread type of arrangement, Pearson's Chapel Alliance near Alexander City contracted with three local merchants to give them the local Alliance trade in return for "prices never before known to the farmers of our country."<sup>163</sup> Many local Alliances made such arrangements, but in the long run they probably aided the merchants and worked against the goals of the Alliance. Moreover, most of the Alliance's more grandiose schemes such as holding the cotton crop for higher prices or securing a moratorium on debts never even had a chance of succeeding.

By 1890 the Alliance's cooperative activities had helped build up a large rural membership which in turn had gained internal cohesion and a sense of purpose in large part from the cooperative movement. Moreover, the order's cooperative activities may even have contributed to a revolution in rising expectations among Alabama's farmers by offering them a way out of poverty. On the other hand, however, the Alliance's economic programs had begun deteriorating rapidly on all fronts and more and more alliancemen were becoming convinced that cooperation would never bring economic relief.<sup>164</sup> While the collapsing cooperative movement offered less and less hope for the salvation of Alabama's farmers, their distress threatened to grow worse and their enemies still flourished. At the

<sup>159</sup>Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 158; Clanton *Chilton View*, October 17, 1889. See also, Athens *Alliance Banner*, March 22, April 5, 1888; Athens *Alabama Farmer*, August 22, 1888; Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, March 22, 1888.

<sup>160</sup>*Livingston Journal*, January 31, 1889.

<sup>161</sup>See, for example, Athens *Alliance Banner*, April 12, 1888.

<sup>162</sup>Six Mile *Bibb Blade*, August 16, 1888; Athens *Alabama Farmer*, August 29, October 3, 1888; *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, 163-164.

<sup>163</sup>Athens *Alliance Banner*, March 22, 1888.

<sup>164</sup>See McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 53-54.

same time, the Alliance movement had instilled in the state's farmers the idea that they had enlisted on the right side in a conflict of cultures between Jeffersonian agrarianism and a new materialistic industrial urbanism. The Alliance had not yet made a determined effort to obtain statewide political power, but soon the order became increasingly involved in political action to achieve its agrarian goals.

Robert Penn Warren. *Jefferson Davis Gets His Citizenship Back*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980. pp. 114. \$8.75)

About thirty years ago University of Alabama's Hudson Strode, armed with letters that Mrs. Jefferson Davis had given his mother-in-law, visited Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman in Richmond and told him he was writing a biography of Confederate President Davis. The Pulitzer prize-winning historian asked tersely: "Why?" Had I been there, I would have piped up, "Because it's needed".

However, perhaps the first historian, Herodotus of Halicarnassum might have the last word on writing about Jefferson Davis. . . . "that the great deeds of men may not be forgotten. . . . whether Greek or foreigners; and especially the causes of their wars."

Robert Penn Warren was born in Guthrie, Kentucky in 1905 of a Virginia heritage. He was one of the four Southerners who comprised the Nashville Fugitives in the 20's, one of the most influential groups in American letters. In 1930, he became one of the twelve Southerners who published their Agerian manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*. A Pulitzer Prize winner in both fiction (1947) and poetry (1958) he has been an English professor at Yale since 1961 and resides in Fairfield, Connecticut. The most distinguished voice in this small volume speaks with a deep understanding of a Southern heritage, a broad geographically garnered education and a Northern residence.

In a sweeping 114-page history, Mr. Warren sensitively distills an entire biography of Jefferson Davis, fights the Civil War all over again, deftly contrasts Lincoln and Davis, explains the issue of Mr. Davis' citizenship and justifies the North and the South.

Drawing upon childhood chats with his grandfather who fought in The War, Professor Warren sets the mood with an 11-page preamble before he even mentions Jefferson Davis' name. These "fumbling recollections" of his childhood in Guthrie, only a few miles from Fairfield where Jefferson Davis was born, prepare the uninitiated for what is to come and



establishes the author's credentials. Warren then plunges into a succinct history of Jefferson Davis' life, loves, strengths and flaws. This is written in pure poetry, woven into the warp and woof of perception and history and makes the work readable and personal.

Jefferson Davis died on December 6, 1889.

On January 25, 1976 Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon introduced Senate Joint Resolution 16 to return citizenship to Jefferson Davis "to keep green and to restore to him the rights due an outstanding American." The resolution passed unanimously by voice vote and on October 17, 1978 President Carter signed it into law.

So, now Jefferson Davis has his citizenship back (which he never believed he lost in the first place), but he has not yet been pardoned (which would not bother him, since he believed that he never did anything to warrant a pardon).

Why is the event important? Warren declares that it is because Jefferson Davis has emerged holding "an eternal franchise in that shadowy rarely-remembered nation of men and women who in their brief lives learned the true definition of honor."

The young need heroes. They need lessons in honor in today's "business ethic," where depersonalized men are judged by their money rather than their character and honor. Perhaps an imperfect hero in this imperfect world is easier to identify with than say, R. E. Lee.

The time is right for a definitive biography of Jefferson Davis to be written. The rancor of prior generations has died as the South has risen. With Hudson Strode's adulatory three-volume biography out of print and others tantalizing but found wanting, there is a need to publicize and popularize the life of Jefferson Davis. With the cooperation of Davis family descendants, Jefferson Davis's papers have been collected and are being published by Rice University. Other "very human" letters have just been uncovered in a Memphis bank which promise to reveal other facets in the character and personality of the man known in his own time as the Sphinx of the Confederacy. With the broad dissemination of this essay when it was first

published in the *New Yorker* magazine and now with the printing of this typographically attractive, splendidly written, handy volume, perhaps a scholarly historian with a romantic soul and a flair for the dramatic will be moved to do so.

Cameron Freedman Napier  
Regent  
The White House Association  
(Founded in 1900 to save the  
First White House of the Confederacy  
in Montgomery, Alabama.)

Richard J. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed: The Siege At Petersburg*. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981. Pp. 670, 82 photos, 22 maps, index. \$22.50.)

If you are looking for a book which will explain in detail the myriad events of the ten-month siege of Petersburg, Virginia by Union forces in 1864-65, this book will not be of much help. However, if you want a complete library on the Civil War this work is a must addition. The author makes an in-depth study of four eventful days in September-October, 1864 which decided whether the Confederacy's capitol would finally be captured by overwhelming numbers of Federal forces — or be redeemed once again by its resourceful and courageous defenders manning the trenches around Petersburg.

The pivotal movements and battle actions by units of Major General Benjamin Butler's Army of the James, which resulted in their capture of Fort Harrison below Richmond — one of the most vital Confederate defensive positions on the peninsula — and which very easily could have meant the capture of the capitol city itself, are superbly recounted by the author. Every regiment that took part or might have taken part on each side has its battle honors clearly recorded. So thorough is Sommers' account that National Park Service interpreters at Richmond Battlefield find this portion of the book invaluable in their work. Especially revealing are the insights gained by the reader of the importance of the critical interchange of communications between Grant, the overall Federal commander headquarters at City Point, and Butler in the field. Butler's plan, so brilliantly conceived, could not help but succeed or so

it would seem. Stout Confederate resistance coupled with daring and exhausting movements of their scant troops from point to point finds one wondering how they ever managed to hold what ground they did against such superior numbers. Sommers' treatment of this phase of Grant's "Fifth Offensive" makes the situation all too easy to understand.

Simultaneous with Butler's threatening movements on the peninsula, Union Major General George Meade commanding the Army of the Potomac which surrounded Petersburg on three sides, hoped to take advantage of Lee's problems of manpower and supply. His role in the grand offensive was to roll up the weakened left of the Southern lines and thereby seize the last remaining railroads supplying Petersburg. This capture of the Army of Northern Virginia's principal supply depot would almost certainly cause Lee to evacuate Richmond, the most sought after prize of every Union field commander. Meade's operation was also well conceived and planned but the inaction of his subordinate generals and their general failure to consolidate hard won gains left him with little reward for his efforts. This "other half" of the campaign is thoroughly treated by the author.

A minor source of irritation was the author's non-uniform reference to Confederate forces as "Butternuts," "Secessionists," or "Graycoats" in both text and maps. Also, too much detail concerning individual troop movements is included during Meade's offensive. Since this action of the war and the terrain on which it took place are not that well known to the general readership of the Civil War, a few more lucid maps would have been of considerable help. These two shortcomings are made up for by the inclusion of numerous human interest accounts and excellent analyses of leadership on both sides.

The author has done his research well, thoroughly document every movement of the opposing forces with original source material, much of it previously unpublished. Originally written as a doctoral dissertation over a decade ago, Sommers' account of Grant's fifth attempt to capture the "Cockade City" should forever remain the principal book on this chapter of the American Civil War.

Paul A. Ghioto  
Horseshoe Bend, Alabama